Updates sought on projects under $243.9M typhoons recovery grant. PAGE 3
MTEC Tourism App Challenge deadline on Feb. 6. PAGE 6

Hafa Adai!

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CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND

Over $34.3M in questioned costs

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

An independent audit has determined that the CNMI is not in compliance with the Coronavirus Relief Fund of the U.S. Department of the Treasury, as well as its reporting requirements, and that questioned costs in the total amount of $34.3 million exist.

In a report on Monday, auditing company Deloitte & Touche LLC said that ques-

See OVER on Page 4

'PE may be extended past end of health emergency'

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

The National Public Health Emergency, which gave nearly everyone access to free or affordable medical care through Presumptive Eligibility Medicaid, is supposedly set to end on May 11. However, there may still be hope for another extension, thanks to the continuous coverage of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023.

As the world continues to make positive strides toward treating the COVID-19 virus as an endemic instead of a pandemic, President Joe

See PE on Page 4

Lineup of Cabinet appointees unveiled

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, seated left, Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang, seated right, and Rep. Ralph Yumul (Ind-Saipan), seventh from left, pose for a group photo with Cabinet appointees and special assistants after a news briefing yesterday afternoon in the Office of the Governor's conference room.
FERDIE DE LA TORRE

» Sablan, Staffler, Yumul among appointees

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang announced yesterday the appointments of most members of their Cabinet, including former representatives Christina E. Sablan and Leila F. Staffler, who have

See LINEUP on Page 4

IN LAWSUIT ALLEGING ILLEGAL TYPHOON YUTU OT PAY

Ex-DLNR chief, OAG reach settlement

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

Former Department of Land and Natural Resources secretary Anthony Benavente has reached a settlement with Attorney General Edward Manibusan in the illegal overtime

See OAG on Page 4

INSIDE

ASIA
The death toll from the suicide bomb blast in Peshawar in Pakistan has climbed to 100.
PAGE 13

ENVIRONMENT
The world will likely breach the agreed-upon climate change threshold in about a decade.
PAGE 14

LIFE & STYLE
Alec Baldwin and a weapons specialist have been charged with involuntary manslaughter.
PAGE 15

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Local

Magofna wants more flexibility for governor to impose price caps

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Sen. Corina L. Magofna (Ind-Saipan) wants the governor to have more flexibility to impose caps on increases in prices which businesses may charge for consumer goods indexed to consumer prices.

For this reason, Magofna introduced Tuesday a bill, which she calls the Price Control Act of 2023, that would amend the Commonwealth Disaster Price Freeze Act of 1996 to provide for a flexible response to the economic challenges posed by the COVID-19 healthy emergency.

The existing law permits the governor to implement a temporary price freeze in the event of a typhoon or natural disaster.

Under Magofna's Senate Bill 22-16, upon the governor's declaration that the CNMI is in Typhoon Condition II, or Tropical Storm Condition I, or in case of a gubernatorial declaration of a State of Significant Emergency or a State of Major Disaster, including a Public Health Emergency, pursuant to his or her constitutional power to do so, the governor may declare a price freeze or cap that shall last until the governor rescinds the prize freeze or cap, or the declaration of emergency or disaster is terminated.

Magofna

Upon the declaration of a price cap, all prices of items for sale, and housing rentals, including apartments and condos, shall be permitted to increase by no more than the increase in the consumer price index of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics in a given month, until the governor rescinds the price cap or the declaration of emergency or disaster is terminated.

The bill also imposes criminal and civil penalties on violators.

While imposing price caps is a significant interjection into market transactions, Magofna stated in the bill that times of crises call for extraordinary measures to safeguard the community.

She said inflation, rising fuel costs, the ongoing economic fallout from the pandemic, reduced tourism, and other factors have contributed to a difficult fiscal environment for the people of the Marianas.

To ensure that key consumer goods necessary for the people's livelihood remain within their reach, she said this legislation amends the CNMI Disaster Price Freeze Act of 1996 to permit the government to respond to the economic challenges of health emergencies.

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SOME CONDITIONS AND RESTRICTIONS MAY APPLY. NOT APPLICABLE ON ANY ON-GOING PROMOTIONS. AVAILABLE WHILE SUPPLIES LAST

Updates sought on projects under $243.9M typhoons recovery grant

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Sen. Paul A. Manglona (Ind-Rota) has called for a public hearing with officials of the Northern Marianas Housing Corp. after expressing concern over the progress of projects and completion dates under the Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery grant agreement of $243.9 million.

Manglona

Manglona, who chairs the Senate Committee on Public Utilities, Transportation and Communications, told Saipan Tribune Tuesday that there are award datelines to be met and good projects to be initiated under the CDBG-DR grant agreement.

"These monies are to be used for infrastructure programs, housing programs, and economic revitalization," he said.

The PUTC chairman said the main purpose of the public hearing is to get an update from NMHC, which administers the funds, on the CDBG-DR grant agreement of $243.9 million for the communities' recovery from Typhoon Mangkhut and Super Typhoon Yutu in 2018.

Manglona said the public hearing is supposed to be this Friday, in the Senate chamber, but he will reschedule it for Tuesday next week.

He requested NMHC corporate director Jesse S. Palacios, NMHC deputy corporate director Zenie P. Mafnas, and CNMI CDBG-DR Planning and Program Support program manager Kimo Rosario to be present and they may provide comments during the hearing.

Manglona also asked other witnesses to be present at the hearing—Governor's Authorized Representative to the Public Assistance Office Patrick Guerrero, Office of Management and Budget special assistant Virginia Villagomez, CNMI Historic

See GRANT on Next Page

Enrollment period now open for boats seeking safe haven at marina during typhoon season

Registration of vessels seeking safe haven at the Smiling Cove Marina during a typhoon season is now open. The application period is from Jan. 1, 2023, and will close on March 31, 2023, at 4:30pm.

The Department of Lands & Natural Resources, Division of Fish and Wildlife, Smiling Cove Marina Office Rules & Regulations is encouraging boat owners who wish to utilize the Smiling Cove Marina as a safe haven during a typhoon to apply for a Non-Tenant Storm Condition permit or renew their typhoon contingency permit at the Smiling Cove Marina office.

The Smiling Cove Marina office may be reached through telephone at (670) 323-6070 or by e-mail at dfwscm@gmail.com. ***(PR)***

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OVER

From Page 1

tioned costs of $19,600,539 exist for noncompliance with allowed or unallowed program requirements; questioned costs of $14,632,280 exist for noncompliance with allowable costs/cost principles program requirements; questioned costs of $70,711 exist for non-compliance with financial progress reporting requirements.

These were among the many deficiencies that Deloitte & Touche LLC outlined in its report, which was submitted Monday to Gov. Arnold I. Palacios.

The Office of the Public Auditor hired Deloitte to audit the financial statements of the Department of Public Lands major fund, and the aggregate remaining fund information of the CNMI as of and for the year ending Sept. 30, 2020, and the related notes to the financial statements. Deloitte was also engaged to audit the financial statements of government activities, and each of the remaining major funds.

The findings of deficiencies and questioned costs with respect to Coronavirus Relief Fund, or CRF, are in the Deloitte's report on the CNMI's compliance for each major federal program, report on internal control over compliance, and report on schedule of expenditures of federal awards required by the uniform guidance.

The auditor said they identified certain deficiencies in internal control that they consider to be material weaknesses and significant deficiencies.

The CRF was designed to provide ready funding to address unforeseen financial needs and risks created by the COVID-19 public health emergency. Payments must be used to cover costs that are, among other things, necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency with respect to COVID-19, and incurred from March 1, 2020, to Dec. 30, 2021.

In May 2021, the CNMI received an estimated total of $481.9 million in Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds that the U.S. Congress appropriated under the American Rescue Plan Act.

In December 2021, then-Finance secretary David DLG Atalig disclosed that the $21.7 million in CRF that then-U.S. House of Representatives speaker Nancy Pelosi has asked about had already been spent by the CNMI government.

Deloitte said one of the causes for the questioned costs is that the CNMI lacks monitoring control procedures over the use of the CRF funding.

The auditor said the other cause is that CRF and Federal Emergency Management Agency COVID-related expenditures were recorded in Fund 1010, Business Unit 1699J, instead of segregating the expenditures in separate Business Units to facilitate identification and segregation of program expenditures.

The auditor said the expenditures detail report was manually prepared in an Excel worksheet and was not an expenditure general ledger detail generated from CNMI's accounting system.

The auditor said expenditures reported on the final revised expenditures detail report are to agree to the amounts reported in the Grant Solutions portal.

The auditor found, among other causes, that the CNMI lacks adequate documentation and systematic filing of relevant documentation supporting program costs.

The auditor recommends that the CNMI should, among other things, establish and implement monitoring control procedures over the use of the CRF funding, and preparation of the expenditures detail report to verify its completeness and accuracy.

The auditor recommends that the CNMI should consider recording program expenditures in the same Fund account and Business Unit separate from other program expenditures to facilitate identification and segregation of program expenditures.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

LINEUP

From Page 1

been appointed as senior policy adviser and Department of Labor secretary, respectively.

Palacios introduced the new Cabinet members, who were all present, at a news briefing in the Office of the Governor's conference room.

Palacios said that, as their fiscal team started doing its work, they had the opportunity and the time to begin putting together the administration's team.

"So this afternoon we're ready to announce most of those appointments to the public," he said.

Palacios said it's been almost a month since he and Apatang took office, but there were a lot of critical issue that were at the forefront of their administration. "We're very happy that we are now able to begin to constitute our Cabinet members," he said.

Several positions have not been filled yet, including that of the Department of Public Safety commissioner, but Palacios said the names are "pretty much finalized."

He said some of them are off-island so they are holding the announcements back until they are back on island.

The governor said these are challenging times and that he expects nothing but hard work and dedication from their appointees, just as the public expects.

"We believe that, individually they are more than qualified to take on the individual tasks. But it's really going to be the collective effort to move the Commonwealth forward to addressing some of the issues," he said.

With respect to Sablan's appointment, Palacios said they are still negotiating but she will most likely be doing work as a senior policy adviser for him.

Apatang said these appointees are the people who will be "running the show" in the administration and are rebuilding the trust team.

Apatang said they invited members Legislature to the press conference as they are working together for the community and people.

He said he is looking forward to working with the media as well, and appealed to the media to put out the "right" information. "I never fight with anybody. I love everybody on this island. I've never known to hate anybody," the lieutenant governor said, drawing laughter from some Cabinet members.

A news report Tuesday (not *Saipan Tribune*) carried a headline stating that Apatang doesn't like his successor, Saipan Mayor Ramon Blas "RB" Camacho.

Sablan said that, as the governor had alluded, they are still negotiating the terms of her position, but her interest lies in working with Palacios and with the Legislature, the CNMI delegate in the U.S. Congress, agency and department heads, and federal partners and other stakeholders, to advance the governor's policy agenda.

Sablan ran for governor under the Democratic Party, with Staffler as her running mate as lieutenant governor, during the Nov. 8, 2022 general elections. They came in third place in the three-way race and Sablan and Staffler immediately conceded defeat and threw their support behind the Palacios-Apatang team in the gubernatorial runoff race that was held last Nov. 25.

Sablan was a three-term lawmaker in the House of Representatives. She holds a master's degree in urban and regional planning at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Staffler said she is excited to serve with this team, describing it as an "amazing group of professional and talented individuals who are ready to serve and see how they can help the community in this tough situation."

"I know that each of us have a lot of solutions and innovative ways that we can look at the problems ahead and find solutions for all that can bring us to a harmony that we all need and deserve," Staffler said.

Staffler was a teacher for 10 years, and an administrator for 10 years.

Anthony C. Torres is the commissioner of the Department of Corrections, Joseph Rios as the Department of Commerce secretary, Tracy B. Norita as the Department of Finance secretary, Ray N. Yumul is the Department of Public Works secretary, and Sylvan Igisomar is the Department of Lands and Natural Resources Secretary.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

PE

From Page 1

Biden recently informed the U.S Congress that he will end the twin national emergencies for addressing COVID-19 on May 11, specifically the National Emergency and Public Health Emergency declarations.

According to Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. CEO Esther Muña, Presumptive Medicaid is tied to the Public Health Emergency, but because of the continuous coverage of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023, there is still hope for an extension past the end of the emergency declaration.

"We understand that the Presumptive Eligibility is connected to the Public Health Emergency declaration issued by the U.S. secretary of Health. However, there was an earlier indication that the PE would end after March 31, 2023, as part of the continuous coverage of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023. This announcement does give hope for an extension up to May 31, 2023. We assume that the 60-day notice will be given in March to ensure this extension," she said.

However, because the act would only extend PE another 60 days, CHCC is looking into ways to ensure that those who are receiving treatment and those with severe illnesses who depend on PE do not lose coverage.

"The Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. wants to work with Medicaid and all involved in policymaking to find solutions for those individuals that will lose coverage when the PE ends. We especially want to ensure that those currently receiving treatment for their severe illnesses, especially cancer and cardiovascular, have continuous coverage. Otherwise, the uncompensated costs of providing services will go to CHCC alone," she said.

Presumptive Eligibility is an expedited process of enrolling eligible residents in the CNMI Medicaid program. It allows patients to have their care covered while waiting for their application to be fully processed.

It offers immediate access to healthcare while applying for regular Medicaid or other health coverage. You can start using PE for Medicaid coverage right away for Medicaid covered services, such as doctor visits, hospital care, and some prescription drugs.

Individuals and families are eligible for Medicaid if their attested gross income does not exceed 180% of the Supplemental Security Income federal benefit, which is about $28,800 annually for a family of four.

OAG

From Page 1

lawsuit the Office of the Attorney General earlier filed against the former secretary.

Benavente, through his lawyer, Robert T. Torres, and Manibusan, through OAG Chief Solicitor Robert Glass Jr., have filed a stipulation agreeing on a settlement outside of court proceedings in the illegal overtime suit filed by the OAG in 2022.

Pursuant to the stipulation, the parties agreed that the court shall enter a partial judgment against Benavente in the sum of $6,198.43 as settlements for the claims of illegal overtime compensation accrued for Typhoon Yutu-related work in 2018 and 2019.

"The stipulation is for the purpose of achieving partial resolution of the claims alleged by Manibusan in the complaint filed in this action," states the stipulation.

According to the parties, Benavente, who is currently unemployed, shall pay at least $100 per month on the first of each month starting this month, to the CNMI Treasury.

As for the causes of actions as to excessive compensation/excessive salary, the parties have reserved the matter for separate disposition.

"The parties anticipate requesting the court to rule upon this dispute through stipulated motion for partial summary judgment in as much as the parties anticipate undisputed facts and/or documents for the court's resolution and determination. The parties will discuss the matter further with the court at the upcoming status conference," the parties stated.

According to the complaint against Benavente, Manibusan alleges that the former DLNR secretary received over $30,000 in typhoon premium pay that he should not have been entitled to.

As relief, Manibusan asked the court to issue a judgment of $36,198.43 for recovery of the allegedly unlawful typhoon premium payments, overtime payments, or extra payments not authorized by law.

Aside from returning the money, the AG also asked that the court issue a declaratory judgment declaring that the personnel regulations authorizing payment of typhoon emergency premium pay, overtime, and extra pay do not apply to gubernatorial appointees; that the director of Personnel and governor lack the authority to authorize additional compensation except as provided by law; and that compensation in excess of the salary ceiling cannot be authorized except as provided by law.

According to the lawsuit, Benavente accrued over $36,000 in total OT compensation, causing his salary to go beyond the statutory limit of $54,000, which is against the law.

The lawsuit said that Benavente received typhoon premium pay in the total gross amount of $6,198.43 back in 2018 for Yutu-related work done that year, while at least $30,000 has been paid since May 17, 2022.

GRANT

From Page 3

Preservation Office State Historic Preservation officer Rita Chong-Dela Cruz, Division of Fish and Wildlife director Manny Pangelinan, Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality administrator Eli C. Cabrera, and members of the NMHC board of directors.

The CNMI received an allocation of CDBG-DR funds as a result of the damage it sustained from typhoons Mangkhut and Yutu.

In order to address both the direct and indirect impacts of the two storms, the previous Torres administration stated that that the CNMI has developed the Rental Rehabilitation, Reconstruction, and New Construction Program to cover the eligible costs for repair or replacement of storm-related damage to individual site rental properties as well as to increase the stock of rental units with new construction or acquisition of individual units.

Anthony Torres is nominated DOC commissioner

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

Anthony C. Torres has been nominated as Department of Corrections commissioner under the Palacios-Apatang administration.

Anthony C. Torres has been nominated as Department of Corrections commissioner under the Palacios-Apatang administration and, although he is still getting the hang of things, he is adamant about making the department as safe as possible for personnel and as well as inmates.

DOC inmates have been complaining about their safety within the CNMI's sole detention facility, with a handful filing lawsuits and alleging maltreatment. Torres said he aims to address this and put a stop to it while also maintaining transparency for the public.

"Safety and security, providing public safety, and providing a safe and secure environment for our inmates is my No. 1 priority. I am fully committed to prioritizing the safety and security of our officers, staff, and our inmates. I'm also excited to build upon the CNMI's efforts to prepare those serving their time for success after release," he said. "I'm well aware of the [many] concerns and I will touch upon all of them and I want to be transparent, as transparent as possible in informing the community. Safety and security are important and I will address whatever concerns are there head on and while doing that, I will hold people accountable, if need be."

Torres' nomination will require the consent of the Senate and, while awaiting his confirmation to the post, he will be the DOC chief in an acting capacity.

Torres, who just returned to the islands after serving several years as a correctional officer for the U.S Department of Justice's Federal Bureau of Prisons, has just started to dip his feet into the rules and protocols that govern the CNMI's correctional facility and will update the community on the issues within the department and his solutions moving forward.

Torres, who was born on Saipan, began his law enforcement career in 1999 as an Adult Correctional Officer for the Department of Public Safety at Halawa Prison in Honolulu, Hawaii.

In 2002, Torres advanced his career as a correctional officer for the U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Prisons at the Federal Detention Center Honolulu.

His outstanding performance was recognized by the institution and his efforts earned him a position of increased responsibility as a systems specialist, acting in multiple managerial roles.

In 2015, he was promoted to a treatment specialist in the Challenge Program at the United States Penitentiary Tucson, a high-security federal prison in Arizona.

In 2018, he was assigned to the Federal Correctional Institution Tucson, a medium-security facility designated "drop-out yard" housing former gang members, cartels, law enforcement officers and politicians, as a drug treatment specialist working in the Non-Residential Drug Abuse Program.

Torres participated in many collateral duties and leadership roles to include Arizona Special Operations Response team member, Discipline Hearing officer, Hispanic program manager, and lead self-defense instructor.

The acting DOC commissioner also has an educational background in Criminal Justice from Chaminade University in Honolulu, holds a black belt in Brazilian jiu-jitsu, and was the first Chamorro to compete in the Ultimate Fighting Championship.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Santa Lourdes novena starts on Friday

The people of As Teo announced yesterday that the annual Santa Lourdes novena in As Teo, Saipan, starts on Friday, Feb. 3, 2023. From Feb. 3 to Feb. 10, rosary and novena will start at 5pm. On Saturday, Feb. 11, the rosary and novena will start at 2pm, followed by Mass at 3pm. Everyone is are invited.

Free webinars on gov't contracting

The Guam Procurement Technical Assistance Center is offering free webinars this month.

Webinars are held every Wednesday—unless otherwise stated—from 10am to 11:30am via Zoom. Links are emailed to all registered attendees 30 minutes before the webinar.

■ **Thursday, Feb. 2, 2023 – SAM Registrations –** *Vendors need an active SAM registration to participate in Federal contracting. The Guam PTAC will take you through the new Entity Validation process, the actual SAM registration, and follow-up requirements. We will also discuss the new annual renewal process.*

■ **Feb. 8, 2023 – Federal Contract Opportunities –** *SAM.gov is the portal for federal contract opportunities. The Guam PTAC will show you how to use the website to ensure you do not miss any opportunities. Opportunity types, search filters, and search strategies will be discussed.*

■ **Feb. 15, 2023 – PIEE/WAWF –** *Department of Defense vendors use the Wide-Area Workflow module in the Procurement Integrated Enterprise Environment system to create, submit, and track their invoices. The Guam PTAC will show you how to setup an account and submit an invoice so you get paid on time.*

■ **Feb.22, 2023 – Gov-Guam Procurement –** *The Guam PTAC will explain Government of Guam Procurement, where to find opportunities, and how to submit bids.*

To register, visit**:** https://www.guamptac.com/news-and-events.php ***(PTAC)***

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Position: Order Clerk
Duties and Responsibilities: Verify customer and order information for correctness, checking it against previously obtained information as necessary. Receive customer orders and respond to customer complaints. Review orders for completeness. Inform customers of order information, such as unit prices, or shipping dates, and any anticipated delays. Obtain customers' names, addresses, and billing information. Recommend merchandise that will meet customers' needs. Prepare invoices according to orders received. Check inventory records to determine availability of requested merchandise. Collect payment for merchandise ordered, record transactions and send items such as cash and checks for further processing at the mXain office. File copies of invoices, delivery receipts and other pertinent documents. Adjust or record inventory movement such as warehouse transfers. Perform other related duties assigned.
Qualification Requirements: Must be High School graduate. Proficient with Personal Computers and software. Knowledge of basic mathematics and basic calculations. Good communication skills.

Position: Delivery Driver
Duties and Responsibilities: Drive a light truck or van, primarily to deliver goods or merchandise. Load and unload truck or van with merchandise verifying the contents against invoice documents. Perform mathematical computation in case of returns or adjustments. Present bill or invoice and collect payments for goods delivered. Turn in complete invoice copies and money received from deliveries. Inspect vehicle before using to ensure that vehicles are in proper working condition and record results in a vehicle log sheet. Report any mechanical problems encountered with the vehicle. May be required to load and unload merchandise in the container, help in stacking merchandise in the warehouse shelves manually or by using forklift. Perform other duties related to warehouse activity as needed from time to time.
Qualification Requirements: High School graduate with minimum one year work related experience required. Must be able to lift at least 50 lb. objects daily. Must be proficient in mathematical calculations. Must be able to speak and communicate clearly. Must have a valid CNMI driver's license and possess a good driving record. Must pass a Driver's Medical Health Screening including drug test.

Position: Warehouse Worker
Duties and Responsibilities: Unload merchandise from container to be stocked in warehouse shelves manually or by using dolly, pallet jack, or forklift. Examine and inspect merchandise for any damage or spoilage, reporting any discrepancy or damage. Receive and count merchandise, and record data manually or using computer. Clean and maintain supplies, tools, equipment, and storage or work areas to ensure compliance with safety regulations. Provide assistance or direction to other warehouse workers and perform other related duties assigned.
Qualification Requirements: Minimum one year work related experience required. Ability to perform physical activities that require considerable use of arms and legs and moving the whole body such as climbing, lifting, balancing, walking, stooping, and handling of materials. Must be able to do strenuous work such as unloading container vans, stacking, lifting, carrying, and moving heavy objects. Must be able to lift 50 to 80 lbs. frequently and up to 90 lbs. occasionally. Must pass food handler certification

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- Can work on a fast paced environment.
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E-mail resume to: islandtrainingsolutions@gmail.com
and deltaspn@pticom.com

MTEC Tourism App Challenge deadline on Feb. 6

The Marianas Tourism Education Council is reminding all middle school and high school students in the Marianas that submission deadline for its MTEC Tourism App Challenge is Monday, Feb. 6.

The contest challenges students to design an app for visitors to the Marianas destination. The contest goals are, first, to enhance tourists' understanding of the island community, landscape, hospitality businesses and other service elements that the Northern Mariana Islands is proud to offer, and second, to provide accurate and timely information about the place, people, organizations, and services the Marianas has to offer as a destination.

"We encourage our young people to test their wings with the app development and give this challenge a shot," said MTEC acting chairwoman Vicky Benavente. "As recommended by our MTEC board member Dr. Galvin Guerrero, there are a ton of wonderful resources for young app developers at commonsense.org, and we look forward to seeing the submissions."

Students may compete as individuals or in teams of up to three students. Each participating individual or team shall submit only one app for competition. The deadline to submit is 11:59pm Chamorro Standard Time, Feb. 6, 2023. Cash prizes will be awarded to the team leader: first place, $500; second place, $300, and third place, $200. ***(MTEC)***

AMERICAN RED CROSS HONOREE

Triana Palemai, who is the NMI Operations Admin and Fleet volunteer for the American Red Cross-NMI Chapter, was recently selected as the October 2022 Regional Winner by a committee of volunteers and her name was submitted for consideration at the Division Level (which covers Alaska, California, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, Hawaii, Guam, the CNMI, and American Samoa). Palemai was then chosen as the November 2022 Division winner. At the NMI Chapter, Palemai helps with the Disaster Action Team and makes sure to be there for clients when no other DAT member is available. She spends most of her free time helping at the Red Cross and is also a volunteer at the Miracle Hands Center. "Congratulations, Triana and thank you for all that you do and continue to do for the Red Cross," said the NMI Chapter in a recent news release. "We are so blessed to have her on our team and want her to be recognized throughout the region for all that she has done and continues to do for the Red Cross."

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Former parolee allegedly assaults DOC officer; denied bail revision

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A former parolee who was previously arrested and detained at the Department of Corrections has been denied bail modification for alleged drug use and assaulting a DOC officer.

Following his bail modification hearing yesterday, Superior Court Associate judge Teresa Kim-Tenorio denied the second bail modification requested by Edward Iglecias Blas, a former parolee who was previously arrested anew for assaulting his girlfriend and threatening two others with a knife.

During the hearing, it was learned that Blas admitted to using drugs and he also allegedly assaulted a DOC officer while incarcerated again.

Following the hearing, Blas was remanded back to DOC and was ordered to return to court when ordered to do so.

According to *Saipan Tribune* archives, the court previously imposed a $50,000 cash bail on Blas on two counts of assault with a dangerous weapon and three counts of disturbing the peace.

The complaint against Blas stated that back in November 2022, he threatened to kill two people with a kitchen knife while intoxicated and he also punched his girlfriend.

The girlfriend told police that Blas was mad because he could not find his slippers and that he stabbed a plastic table in anger.

Before being paroled, Blas was serving a 24-year prison sentence after he pleaded guilty to murder in the first degree, which he committed during the perpetration of burglary and/or robbery.

Blas was convicted back in 2011 of murder in the first degree after pleading guilty to the brutal killing of an MHS security guard with two others as part of a plan to rob the school.

He became eligible for parole after serving one-third of his sentence.

Blas, who was 16 at that time of the incident, was charged as an adult with two other teen co-defendants in 2009.

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-23-011

LOWER MIHA SEWER LINE REPLACEMENT

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Lower Miha Sewer Line Replacement in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The project consists of but not limited to the installation of gravity sewer main, new sewer manholes, new service laterals, connection to existing service laterals, and the abandonment of existing sewerline, removal and disposal of existing sewer manholes.

The project is funded by a grant from the United States of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and CUC. The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

CUC requires the project to be completed in **365 calendar days** from date of award of contract.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The IFB package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by site visits will be held on January 24, 2023 at 10:00 AM (ChST) at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No. 17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) copies of the bid MUST be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-23-011, Lower Miha Sewer Line Replacement"** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on February 7, 2023**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before due date and time. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

A Bid Guarantee of not less than fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the Unites States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety.

A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract. Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 27, 2023** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org, with a copy to Larry Manacop, Acting Chief Engineer for Water/Wastewater via email at larry.manacop@cucgov.org, Dennis Formalejo, CUC Water/Wastewater Engineer via email at dennis.formalejo@cucgov.org and Ms. Christie L. Sablan Procurement & Supply, Senior Administrative Technician via email address at christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in said bid proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
RPF23-OGM/CHCC No. 42300030

SUBMISSION DATE: MARCH 02, 2023 TIME: 09:00 A.M.

"2022 CHCC 176K Solar PV Design-Built Integration Project"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED ON THE MUNIS VENDOR SELF SERVICE PORTAL (https://selfservice.dof.gov.mp/vss/) OR AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT HORIGUCHI BLDG, GROUND FLOOR, 123 KOPPA DI ORU & BEACH ROAD, GARAPAN, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS ITB CAN BE MADE TO OFFICE OF GRANTS MANAGEMENT & STATE CLEARINGHOUSE, EPIPHANIO E. CABRERA JR. AT (670) 237-2200

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ EPIPHANIO E. CABRERA, JR.
OFFICE OF GRANTS MANAGEMENT

/S/ VIVIAN M. LIZAMA
ACTING DIRECTOR, P.S.

48 gain teacher certifications through UOG, GDOE program

Forty-eight Guam public school educators now have teacher certifications through a program at the University of Guam that allows them to keep their day jobs while completing courses at UOG.

Under the program, classes are scheduled on Saturdays and after-school hours to allow temporary classroom teachers who don't have certifications, or future teachers who need to be certified, to attend.

The program is paid for with federal funds and takes about a year, including two semesters and a summer. This means teachers or future teachers who qualify don't need to worry about the cost of tuition, but they do have to commit time to the program.

The Guam Department of Education has secured about $230,000 a year in funding from the U.S. DOE Consolidated Grants for the program, said Michelle Camacho, a program coordinator with GDOE.

GDOE and UOG held a recognition ceremony on Jan. 27, 2023, for the educators who earned their certifications. About 16 educators are certified in each batch, and members from the first three batches participated in the ceremony.

Over the past three years, 48 have earned their certifications through the program.

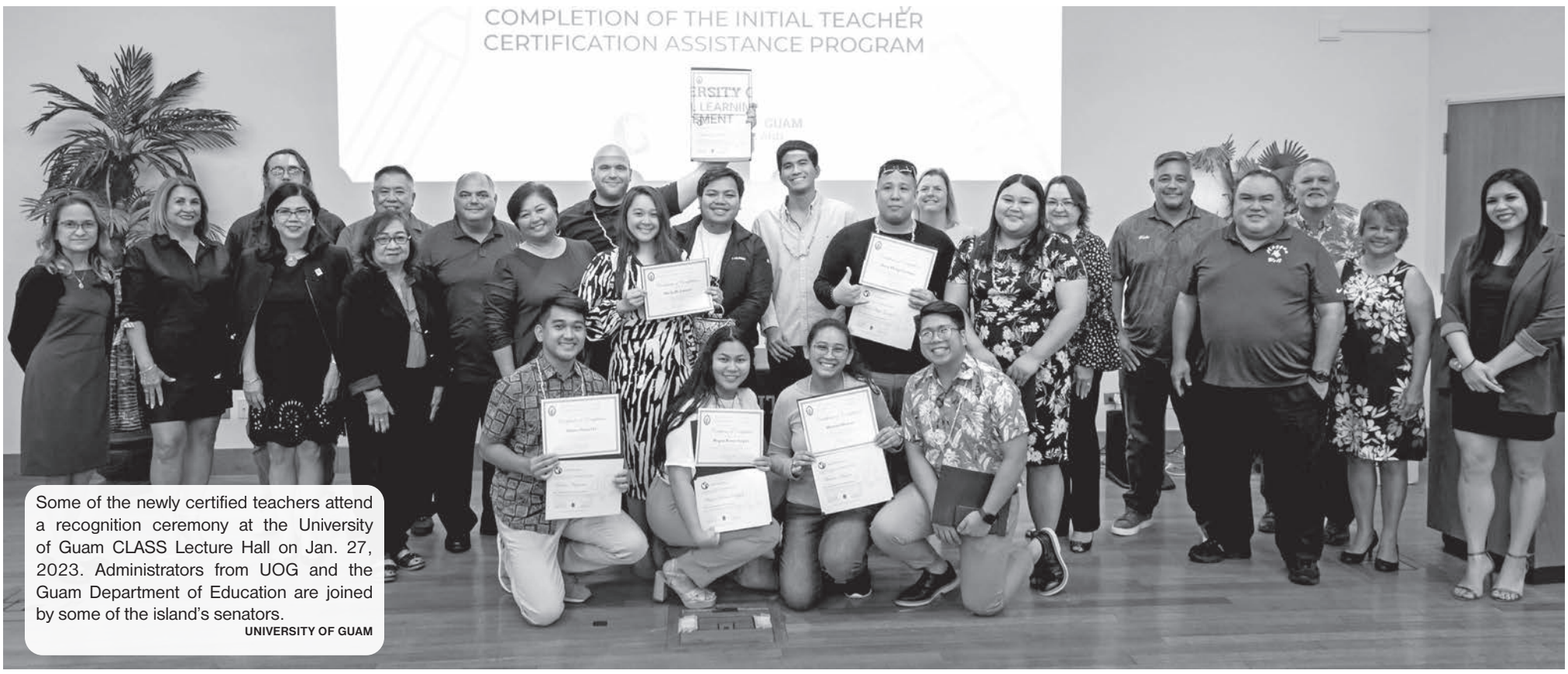
The program is offered through the Global Learning and Engagement Department at the university.

"This program allows [limited-term] teachers to become fully certified," said GLE director Carlos Taitano. "Since its inception, we have added 48 teachers to join the pool of highly qualified teachers at GDOE."

The U.S. DOE funding covers tuition, fees, and courses to prepare educators for the Praxis tests.

There are about 25 slots open in each cohort but not everyone completes the program due to various reasons, Camacho said.

For more information about the teacher certification program and how to apply, email Michelle Camacho at GDOE mmcamacho@gdoe.net or ciqd@gdoe.net. ***(UOG)***



Some of the newly certified teachers attend a recognition ceremony at the University of Guam CLASS Lecture Hall on Jan. 27, 2023. Administrators from UOG and the Guam Department of Education are joined by some of the island's senators.

UNIVERSITY OF GUAM

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

JVA No. 23-025

Opening Date: January 23, 2023
Closing Date: February 3, 2023

POSITION TITLE:	**Administrative Assistant**
DEPARTMENT:	**CFO/Warehouse**
LOCATION:	**Saipan, Northern Marianas Islands, USA**
ANNUAL SALARY:	**$16,742.00 to $22,602.00 per annum, Non- Exempt**
CONTRACT:	**Not Contracted**
POSITION(S):	**One (1)**

The incumbent will be under the direct supervision of the Chief Financial Officer or his/her designee. This class specification represents only the core areas of responsibilities; specific position assignments will vary depending on the needs of the department.

Duties:

- Gathers, assembles, updates, processes and/or distributes forms, documents, requests, invoices, mail and/or records; reviews information for completeness, accuracy and content; resolves discrepancies; prepares information for processing and disseminates and/or maintains documentation.
- Provides reception duties and responds to request for information; provides customer support with completing forms and answering routine questions; refers inquiries as required to the appropriate resource; and advises management of issues for resolution.
- Enters data in systems or on documents; organizes and maintain files, records, logs, and/or timesheets, ensure file integrity and retention of records and documentation according to established procedures.
- Retrieves and/or prepares reports, correspondence, documents, deposits, account adjustments and other related documentation.
- Monitors supplies, materials and/or equipment inventory; prepares requisitions replenishment of supplies or required services; monitors order status, coordinates deliveries and services with vendors; and may provide pickup or delivery of documents or items as needed.
- Copies and scans documents; maintains and organizes files records, reports and accounting transaction documentation.
- May assist with warehouse duties and responsibilities as assigned.
- Performs other duties of a similar nature and level as assigned.

Minimum Requirements:

Education: High School Diploma or General Education Diploma or Adult Basic Education Program.

Knowledge of: Administrative and office procedures and systems; managing files and records; Customer service principles; Basic mathematical principles; Recordkeeping principles; Safety principles and safe work practices; and Modern office technology.

Skills in: Providing customer service and responding to inquiries; Coordinating services with other departments or resources; Preparing, packing, issuing and delivering materials and supplies; Verifying material quantities and quality; Providing attention to detail; Adhering to safety procedures and safe work practices; Maintaining activity logs and reports; Performing basic mathematical calculations; Researching account information or discrepancies; Preparing and maintaining files, forms, reports and records; Copying and scanning documents; Updating, maintaining and preparing reports and spreadsheet tracking documents; Utilizing a computer and relevant software applications; Utilizing communication and interpersonal skills as applied to interaction with coworkers, supervisor, the general public, and others to sufficiently exchange or convey information and to receive work direction.

All applicants may be tested and all applicants are subject to pre-employment drug test.

How to Apply: Submit a completed CUC Employment Application, resume, and applicable supporting documents to the CUC Human Resources office located on the 3rd Floor of the Joeten Dandan Building on Saipan, Monday through Friday 7:30 am – 4:30 pm (Except Legal Holidays). Applicants on the island of Tinian and Rota may submit their documents to their respective CUC Administration office. Application, resume and supporting documents can also be e-mailed to: employment.applications@cucgov.org

P. O. Box 501220, Third Floor, Joeten Dandan Building, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 664-4282 • Fax: (670) 235-5131
CUC is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-23-016

SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF BACKHOES AND TRENCHER FOR THE ISLANDS OF SAIPAN, TINIAN AND ROTA

The Office of the Executive Director for the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids for the supply and delivery of five (5) backhoes and one (1) trencher for the islands of Saipan, Tinian and Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to assist with daily operations for the CUC Water and Wastewater systems.

This project is grant funded from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the Department of the Interior Office of Insular Affairs (DOI-OIA).

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked *"CUC-IFB-23-016, Supply and Delivery of Backhoes and Trencher for the Islands of Saipan, Tinian and Rota)"* to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on March 7, 2023** at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before submission deadline. Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

A Bid Guarantee of fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification should be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid or supply under the contract. The IFB does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the bid under this request, or to procure or contract for goods. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on February 24, 2023**, to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email manny.sablan@cucgov.org and Christie Sablan at christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in the said bids, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids submitted shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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MEMBER

The Associated Press Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

The right's meltdown over M&Ms reveals more than just a chocolatey center

It's unclear whether the recent move by Mars Wrigley candy to sideline its iconic M&Ms "spokescandies" is a genuine reaction to the silliest right-wing controversy yet, or is just a setup for a commercial stunt in the upcoming Super Bowl. Either way, we were hesitant to bite on this non-issue—except that what it says about the right-wing outrage machine is worth chewing over.

For decades, M&Ms have been sold on TV and elsewhere by animated versions of the candies, with faces, arms and feet. The trouble began with their feet, or more accurately, their shoes. Last January, the company began making subtle changes to the characters, including different shoes for two female M&Ms, replacing their big stilettos with more sensible, less sexy footwear.

This was too much for Fox News' Tucker Carlson, who is always on the lookout for a new front in the culture wars. "M&Ms will not be satisfied until every last cartoon character is deeply unappealing and totally androgynous," Carlson glowered. "Until the moment when you wouldn't want to have a drink with any one of them. That's the goal. When you're totally turned off, we've achieved equity. They've won." A chyron under his tirade decried "non-binary candy."

Are we to take from this that Carlson had previously been getting turned on by cartoon candy? In any case, he resumed his grievance campaign recently in response to the addition of a purple spokescandy he called "obese"—because, um, it's a peanut M&M—while fuming that the green M&M might be a lesbian.

The company last week issued a cheeky statement noting that in today's political environment, "even a candy's shoes can be polarizing" and announcing an "indefinite pause" for the cartoon M&Ms. The statement doesn't mention Carlson or the other conservatives who are melting down over the melt-in-your-mouth spokescandies, but the reference was clear.

What's less clear is whether this is corporate cowardice or a clever marketing setup. The company's new spokesperson will be fully human comedian Maya Rudolph, whose job, the announcement said, will be to "create a world where everybody feels they belong." That doesn't exactly sound like they're kowtowing to the grumblers at Fox. It could be that the pause for the spokescandies will end on Sunday, Feb. 12. The company's action so far "has all the earmarks of a Super Bowl ad stunt," as AdAge puts it.

That would be a delicious conclusion to this sticky mess of an issue. What Carlson, Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley and others who are baying about "woke" corporations don't get is that big companies are just doing what they've always done: reflecting the norms of the society in which they operate while trying to make a buck. They know that society has become more inclusive and tolerant in recent years. That's what puts such a bitter taste in Carlson's mouth.

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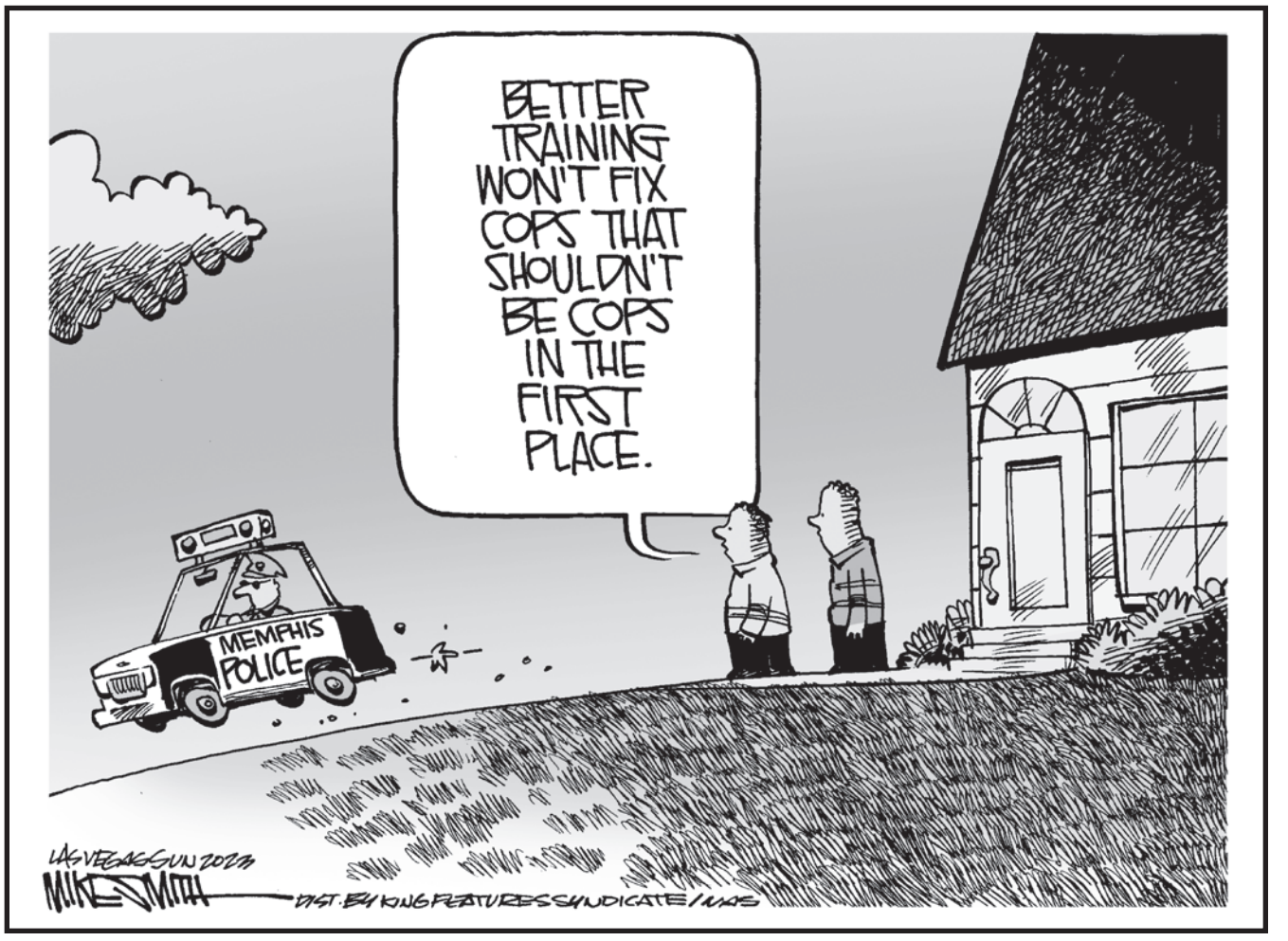

BETTER TRAINING WON'T FIX COPS THAT SHOULDN'T BE COPS IN THE FIRST PLACE.
MEMPHIS POLICE
LAS VEGAS SUN 2023
MIKE SMITH
DIST. BY KING FEATURES SYNDICATE / NAS

Can Biden keep sending Ukraine weapons without provoking Russia?

By WILLIAM D. HARTUNG
Los Angeles Times

William D. Hartung is a senior research fellow at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft.

The Biden administration announced last week that the U.S. will provide 31 Abrams M-1 tanks to Ukraine, and Germany said it will send 14 of its Leopard tanks to Kyiv.

The tank deal and the first anniversary of the start of the war in February offer an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness and future direction of U.S. military aid to Ukraine, which has been authorized at more than $27 billion in the last year alone—an annual amount not seen since the height of the Vietnam War.

American arms and training, combined with the skill and courage of Ukrainian forces, have been highly effective in blunting Russia's attack and rolling back some of its initial territorial gains. The question is how to continue supporting Ukraine without inching closer to a direct U.S.-Russian confrontation.

The tank deal itself will not be a game changer militarily. The relatively small numbers involved, and the fact that the U.S. systems reportedly may not arrive in Ukraine for six months to well over a year, are just part of the issue. Daniel Davis, who served in an armored cavalry regiment in a devastating tank battle with Iraqi forces in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, has pointed out that to be fully effective in using them, U.S. personnel required more than a year of training.

The systems are also extremely difficult to maintain, as undersecretary for defense policy Colin Kahl noted recently, suggesting that the Pentagon's initial reluctance to supply the tanks was because the Defense Department "has been very focused on ... not providing the Ukrainians systems they can't repair, they can't sustain, and that they, over the long term, can't afford." These realities greatly diminish the tanks' role on the battlefield.

So far, the Biden administration has taken some care to avoid providing advanced systems that might provoke a dangerous response from Russia. But the administration's idea of what might be considered provocative has been shifting. That's evident in the recent approvals to provide Patriot missile systems and the M-1s—systems that the administration had originally withheld, partly out of concern over escalation.

There is no objective measure of what might provoke escalation on the part of Moscow, or a reliable prediction of what that escalation might entail. But the tank announcement has sparked fears in Russia that the U.S. and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization may supply ever more effective and sophisticated systems to Ukraine—which could incite a harsh Russian reaction.

For nearly a year, those worries—including fears that Russian President Vladimir Putin would use a tactical nuclear weapon—have guided the West's response to the Russian invasion. Such risks could increase if the war drags on and Putin becomes worried about being defeated or deposed. The Biden administration should proceed with caution in deciding what level of weaponry to provide Ukraine in the coming year, when it will probably face intense pressure—both within the U.S. and from Ukrainian officials—to provide Kyiv with combat aircraft and long-range missiles.

Another concern raised by analysts of U.S. military aid to Ukraine has been the danger that American weapons could fall into the wrong hands. There is no indication that this has happened in any significant way thus far, but as the war continues the dangers of weapons being diverted may rise.

In the conflicts that the U.S. has been involved in over recent decades, American weapons have ended up with adversaries of the U.S. or of U.S. allies, including the Taliban, Islamic State and the Houthi rebels in Yemen. Cold War-era stocks of weapons from former Warsaw Pact nations and former Soviet republics—including Ukraine—have been resold by arms dealers to repressive regimes throughout Africa, and reportedly even to terror groups such as al-Qaida. This history of diversion suggests that a strict monitoring system of arms supplied to Ukraine should be established now to head off potential global proliferation of these weapons in the future.

Perhaps the most important lesson in providing U.S. military aid is that arms alone won't end the war. They must be accompanied by a diplomatic track if a long war or a dangerous turn is to be averted.

There are no immediate prospects for a negotiated end to the Ukraine war. But given the threats of widespread suffering or the risk of a spreading conflict, it's not too soon to start preparing the ground for an eventual settlement. It is essential to continue helping Ukraine to defend itself, but that assistance must be accompanied by diplomatic initiatives if the most dangerous potential outcomes of the war are to be avoided.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

How can we get justice for Tyre Nichols and other victims of police brutality?

By JOANNA SCHWARTZ
Los Angeles Times

Joanna Schwartz is a law professor at UCLA and the author of the forthcoming book Shielded: How the Police Became Untouchable.

On Jan. 7, Memphis police officers stopped 29-year-old Tyre Nichols for a traffic violation and then beat him so viciously that he was hospitalized and died three days later.

Memphis, Tennessee, Police Chief Cerelyn Davis called the beating "heinous, reckless and inhumane," and fired the five officers involved. On Thursday, the district attorney announced that the officers had been arrested and charged with second-degree murder. Late Friday, the city released video footage of the horrific beating.

Less than three years after George Floyd was murdered, there are hauntingly familiar calls for justice for Tyre Nichols. We have been here far too many times before.

Reports of people beaten and killed by police have periodically put the failures of our criminal justice system on the front pages of newspapers. In response, legislative committees have held hearings. Reports have been issued, documenting racist policing, unlawful arrests and excessive force. Reforms have been put into place. Then, invariably, the country's attention has been drawn elsewhere and the conversation has gone quiet.

When the world watched Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin murder Floyd, the conversation began anew. In some ways, it felt different this time around. Police chiefs around the country immediately and unequivocally condemned Floyd's killing. Protests were larger and more racially diverse than ever before. Important reforms got traction at the federal, state and local levels.

But then the nation's sense of urgency began to slip: Protests died down; proposed reforms were voted down; Black Lives Matter murals painted in bright colors on city streets began to fade. Despite unprecedented attention paid to police misconduct and violence in 2020, police killed more people in 2022 than they had in any year since experts began tracking these killings. Now we are poised for yet another painful reckoning.

In the weeks after Floyd was murdered, calls for reform focused on ending a legal protection for police called "qualified immunity." Officers are entitled to qualified immunity—which shields them from liability in civil cases—even if they have violated the Constitution, so long as they have not violated "clearly established law."

The Supreme Court has defined clearly established law in such a narrow way that officers have been granted qualified immunity even when they have stolen more than $225,000 during a search, used a police dog to assault a man who had surrendered, and sat on a man's neck and back until he died. Although some large cities and counties pay tens of millions each year to resolve misconduct lawsuits against their officers, these and many other horrific cases have been dismissed on qualified immunity grounds.

After Floyd's murder, Congress and many states took up legislation that would in effect end qualified immunity. But union officials and other defenders of the status quo argued passionately against them, claiming that police officers and local governments would be bankrupted for reasonable mistakes without qualified immunity.

There is no evidence to support such claims. Officers wouldn't be bankrupted without qualified immunity; local governments almost always pick up the tab when their officers are sued, and these payouts amount to less than 1% of most governments' budgets. And the Supreme Court's interpretation of the Fourth Amendment further shields officers from liability when they make reasonable mistakes. But, in many places, the fears stoked by opponents of these reform bills have proved more powerful than facts on the ground.

Currently, several states, including New York, Washington and New Hampshire, have reintroduced police reform bills. I testified in favor of Washington's bill last week and listened as opponents of the bill raised the very same groundless concerns that have led to other bills' defeat.

The killing of Nichols should serve as a reminder of what is at stake in the continuing debate about police violence and reform. It's not the phantom menace of more lawsuits against the police, but how our society allows these horrible injustices to happen again and again and what we owe to victims of government misconduct and abuse.

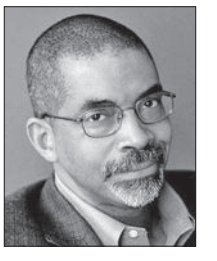
Ending qualified immunity won't end all the problems in policing—far from it. There are many other legal protections shielding law enforcement officers from justice in the courts and from discipline and termination by their departments.

We also need to ask broader questions about what we empower police to do, and how to restore trust between law enforcement and communities they serve. But for now, eliminating qualified immunity is an important first step, given the egregious misconduct it protects.

I'd hoped that we wouldn't have to see another killing on a viral video to restart the national conversation about police reform. Yet here we are. This time, we must focus on facts, not fear-mongering.

Myths about the dangers of making it too easy to sue police have made a mess of our system. We need a shared understanding of why officers must be held accountable for their actions, and a commitment to end senseless legal protections that embolden police and leave victims without a meaningful remedy.

Body camera footage couldn't save Tyre Nichols



By STEPHEN L. CARTER
Bloomberg Opinion

Stephen L. Carter is a Bloomberg Opinion *columnist. A professor of law at Yale University, he is author, most recently, of* Invisible: The Story of the Black Woman Lawyer Who Took Down America's Most Powerful Mobster.

It's mind-numbing to imagine, in the era of universal video, that five police officers could participate in the brutal beating of Trye Nichols, which led to his death three days later. That their body cameras were switched on and filming both their own actions and those of their colleagues seems to have deterred them not at all.

The horror here is on two levels: First, another unjustified killing of an unarmed Black civilian by law enforcement officers, and another Black family forced to mourn a senseless loss; and, second, the realization that the cameras made no difference.

Let's start with the first. Here the scholarship is sobering. We know, for instance, that a Black male has an almost 1 out of 1,000 lifetime chance of being killed by police, by far the highest of any group. Is race the main causal factor? The question has generated heated controversy, but many scholars who've drilled into the data think the answer is yes.

For instance, a 2020 study of some 3,900 police killings found that after correcting for several "objective circumstances" surrounding each episode, Black suspects remained about twice as likely as White suspects to be killed. Yes, the matter remains hotly disputed, but those who see no racial angle in police violence should at least take a look.

On the other hand, nobody doubts the key findings of the economist Roland Fryer's path-breaking 2016 paper on officers' use of "non-lethal" force. The research covers police interactions with civilians in four major cities, examining violence at different levels of intensity, from shoving a suspect against a wall to drawing and pointing a weapon. The stark and startling result: At every level of intensity, force was 50% more likely to be used against Black and Hispanic civilians than against White civilians.

Why would this be? Perhaps because, as the psychologist Jennifer L. Eberhardt and her colleagues reported in a well-known study, police officers themselves are significantly more likely to perceive Black faces than White faces as criminal. Yes, that study was conducted almost two decades ago. The shattering possibility is that it's still true—and that it could also be true when the officers themselves are Black, as they are in this case.

All of which brings us to body-worn cameras, known in the literature as BWCs. They seem to have been the key evidence in the firing of the five officers present when Nichols was beaten to death, and absent guilty pleas, they'll surely be the most persuasive evidence at trial.

There's the irony. BWCs were supposed to be a deterrent against such inhuman violence. That's why they're being widely adopted, not only in the U.S. but around the world. In fact, episodes of unjustified police violence against members of minority groups tends to increase public support for body cameras, and that outcome holds in roughly the same proportion for White and Black respondents alike.

But even before Nichols was so brutally assaulted, the scholarship was raising serious questions about whether the cameras would truly make a difference. For one thing, views about police are increasingly polarized, and apart from the most outrageous acts of violence, it's not obvious that the existence of BWC footage will change that. Research with mock jurors suggests that prior biases either for or against the police tend to carry over into judgments about police actions captured on body cameras.

For another, people don't always believe their eyes. In one much-discussed experiment, test subjects read a police officer's report in which he stated, among other things, that a suspect attacked him and also was carrying a knife. The subjects also viewed BWC footage of the incident. In the video, no knife is visible and the suspect doesn't attack the officer. Nevertheless, asked afterward what they remembered, most said there was a knife and that the suspect attacked.

Here's another peculiarity: Research published in 2019 found that subjects who viewed body camera footage of a violent interaction between an officer and a suspect tended to be more sympathetic toward the officer than those who viewed dashboard camera footage of the same incident.

Perhaps none of that will matter in the death of Tyre Nichols case, where there seems to be little doubt about what happened. I'm never a fan of the rush to judgment, but by all accounts, the footage is so damaging that it's difficult to know what defense the fired officers will mount.

Yet at minimum the horror from which the nation is still reeling tells us that requiring law enforcement officers to wear cameras is no panacea for what ails us.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not by any stretch anti-police. I don't think the median officer is better or worse than the median civilian. Police have a stressful and often dangerous job for which they don't get enough credit or gratitude. I've argued more than once that those who are concerned about violence committed by officers—if they're serious—should support raising, not cutting, the budgets of police departments, not least to pay for better training.

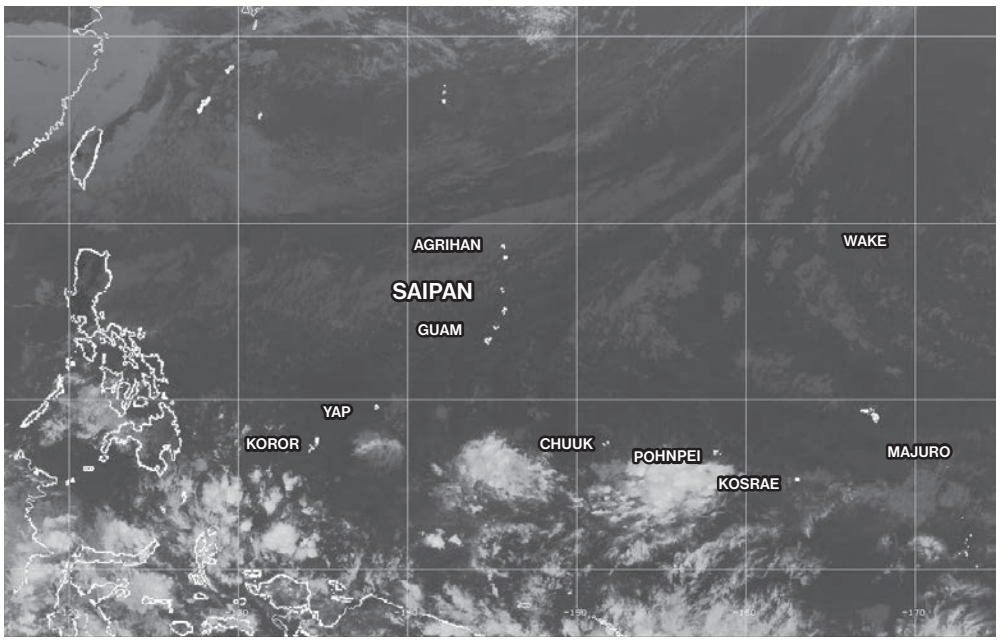
That won't comfort a grieving family, but unlike all politicians fighting for television time to say how appalled they are, it might actually make a difference.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Isolated showers. Mostly sunny	Isolated showers. Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny
85º 78º	84º 77º	85º 78º	84º 77º	84º 77º

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 9:15 AM, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2023

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite and radar imagery shows only partly cloudy skies across the Marianas this morning with only very small isolated showers near the edge of the radar`s range. Winds are mainly moderate this morning with buoys reporting combined seas between 6 and 8 feet.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA	▲ ▼ °F	
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	86° / 79°
Palau	Scattered Thunderstorms	85° / 78°
Yap	Isolated Thunderstorms	85° / 79°
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	86° / 81°
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	87° / 78°
Kosrae	Scattered Thunderstorms	87° / 78°
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	86° / 80°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:45 AM	6:15 PM
Friday	6:45 AM	6:15 PM
Saturday	6:45 AM	6:16 PM
Sunday	6:45 AM	6:16 PM
Monday	6:45 AM	6:17 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	3:57 AM	3:16 PM
Friday	-	4:48 AM	4:08 PM
Saturday	-	5:37 AM	5:00 PM
Sunday	-	6:22 AM	5:52 PM
Monday	-	7:04 AM	6:43 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE	▲ ▼ °F	
Auckland	Thunderstorms	74° / 68°
Beijing	Mostly Cloudy	37° / 20°
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	69° / 62°
Honolulu	Showers	81° / 71°
London	Showers	39° / 34°
Los Angeles	Sunny	82° / 51°
Manila	Partly Cloudy	88° / 75°
Melbourne	Mostly Sunny	82° / 59°
Miami	Sunny	70° / 55°
New York	Cloudy	40° / 29°
Osaka	Cloudy	45° / 34°
Paris	Showers	43° / 34°
Busan	Mostly Sunny	50° / 43°
Rome	Rain	59° / 50°
Salem	Sunny	56° / 38°
San Francisco	Sunny	64° / 46°
Seoul	Partly Cloudy	36° / 22°
Tokyo	Mostly Cloudy	50° / 36°
Washington, DC	Cloudy	39° / 26°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
7:23 AM	High Tide	1.50
12:21 PM	Low Tide	1.14
4:42 PM	High Tide	1.48
-	-	-

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 1, 2023

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:30AM	7:25AM	Daily
UA193	7:55PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	8:00PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA117/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau
OZ624/701	3:50PM	10:35AM+1	3,6 via Incheon

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	3:15AM	6:55AM	1, 4, 5, 7
TW9308	3:50AM	7:20AM	1, 4, 5, 7
OZ624	3:50PM	7:40PM	3, 6
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:46AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA189	12:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	12:40AM	8:46AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:46AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:46AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
OZ704/623	11:50PM	2:20PM+1	2, 5 via Incheon

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

OZ623	9:00AM	2:20PM	3, 6
7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	8:45PM	2:15AM+1	3, 4, 6, 7
TW9307	9:20PM	2:50AM+1	3, 4, 6, 7

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

MARIANAS SOUTHERN AIRWAYS

INITIAL DAILY FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF AUGUST 18, 2022

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
7:00 A.M.	7:15 A.M.	(Except Sundays)
9:50 A.M.	10:05 A.M.	
4:00 P.M.	4:15 P.M.	(Except Saturdays)

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
7:35 A.M.	7:50 A.M.	(Except Sundays)
10:25 A.M.	10:40 A.M.	
4:35 P.M.	4:50 P.M.	(Except Saturdays)

SAIPAN TO ROTA

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
8:10 A.M.	8:40 A.M.	
1:45 P.M.	2:15 P.M.	

ROTA TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
9:00 A.M.	9:30 A.M.	
2:35 P.M.	3:05 P.M.	

SAIPAN TO GUAM

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
11:10 A.M.	12:00 P.M.	
5:15 P.M.	6:05 P.M.	

GUAM TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
12:30 P.M.	1:20 P.M.	
6:40 P.M.	7:30 P.M.	

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JUNE 1, 2022

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30	9:00	Daily
1302	11:00	11:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
1302	12:00	12:30	Tues/Thurs/ Sat/Sun
1303	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	13:00	13:30	Tues/Thurs/ Sat/Sun
3102	14:00	14:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
3103	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

LIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	12:00	12:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily

Public comments sought on Precinct 4 Community Résumé

In 2022, the Office of Rep. Sheila J. Babauta, in collaboration with MPOWERD Solutions, worked on the Precinct 4 Community Résumé, which provides an overview of Saipan's largest geographic precinct. It highlights Precinct 4's diverse and driven small businesses, thriving and sustainable natural resources, and ambitious and mission-driven community leaders who aim to reinvigorate and reinvest in Precinct 4. It provides a summary of baseline conditions, demographic information, and resources in the community and establishes the context for assessing potential impacts and future decision-making.

Then-Rep. Sheila J. Babauta, center, worked with MPOWERD Solutions on the Precinct 4 Community Résumé. The draft is now ready for public comments

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The draft Community Résumé is now available for comments and suggestions by the Precinct 4 community by visiting www.facebook.com/precinct4saipan and providing comments on the designated posts for each section of the report.

"This is our very first Precinct 4 Community Résumé that captures a snapshot of what our precinct has to offer, showcasing our strengths and opportunities. The information I learned during the creation of this project has nourished my love and gratitude for our precinct—and I hope it does the same for you," said Babauta.

Rep. Joel C. Camacho adds the importance of understanding "what are our agencies' priorities and what are the priorities of our community" as we work together to develop community solutions. Former representative Malcolm Jason Omar says, "I am immensely excited to work alongside Rep. Sheila Babauta, Rep. Joel Camacho and these phenomenal women to showcase the beauty, pride, joy and potential of our community."

Babauta, Camacho and Omar, and the MPOWERD team thank all the government agencies and community organizations who contributed to the development of the Precinct 4 Community Résumé.

About MPOWERD Solutions

MPOWERD Solutions, LLC (MPOWERD) is a minority, woman-owned small business and a national organizational development and capacity building firm that supports mission-driven and community-centered initiatives to accelerate social change. Visit www.mpowerd-solutions.com for further information. ***(PR)***

Small craft warned of rough seas

A small craft advisory remains in effect in the CNMI from 6pm last night to 5pm Saturday. This means that wind speeds of 20 to 25 knots are expected to produce wave conditions hazardous to small craft.

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Tiyan, Guam, and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point, east winds of 15 to 25 knots and seas of 7 to 10 feet are expected in Marianas coastal waters up to 5pm Saturday. Conditions will be hazardous to small craft.

Models continue to show winds becoming hazardous to small craft last night and today, with seas building to near 10 feet Thursday through Friday. By Saturday evening, models have conditions dropping below hazardous levels.

Inexperienced mariners, especially those operating smaller vessels, should avoid boating in these hazardous conditions. ***(PR)***

Guam's parrotfish stocks decrease 30% over a decade

Parrotfish numbers in Guam have decreased by 30% over the past decade, according to a University of Guam Sea Grant-funded study conducted by researchers from the UOG Marine Laboratory.

During the study, "Decadal changes in parrotfish assemblages around reefs of Guam, Micronesia," researchers used video cameras to survey parrotfish numbers in 2012 and then again in identical locations in 2021.

The cameras allowed researchers to record the survey of approximately 15,000 parrotfishes. The survey included measuring the length of the parrotfishes.

According to the study, 63% of the surveyed sites with increased numbers of parrotfish stocks were within Marine Protected Areas.

Meanwhile, 70% of the surveyed sites that showed a decline were in unprotected areas.

The study found that overfishing played a role but isn't the only cause of the decline. According to the study, "a complex mixture of exploitation, habitat change from multiple stressors, and responses to management measures" contributed to the change.

The study offers caution that "the potential future decline in fishery production and ecological function is substantial and merits continuous monitoring and proactive management."

According to the study, Guam's coral reefs have faced stress over the past decade. Several major coral bleaching events in Guam have killed large sections of corals, previous UOG studies found.

Parrotfishes—known locally as *laggua* for some of the large varieties, and *palakse'* for some of the smaller ones—are brightly colored, common inhabitants of Guam's coral reefs. They feed daily on reef microalgae and therefore a decline in parrotfish stocks also impacts grazing rates on local reefs.

"This is not the story I was hoping to tell with our research," said Brett Taylor, the study's lead author, assistant professor of fisheries ecology, and UOG Sea Grant researcher. "But fortunately, there has already been positive management action that will hopefully turn this trend around."

According to Taylor, an example of this positive action is Public Law 35-78, which prohibits fishing with a spear or other devices while SCUBA diving. It was enacted into law in March 2020. With the passage of the legislation, Guam joined more than 60 countries, states, and territories that banned the practice.

"This legislation represents the most effective management action for ensuring sustainable reef fisheries. Thus, we hope to see a rebound in fish numbers over the next decade," Taylor said.

The study is published in the journal Coral Reefs.

A copy is available through this link: https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00338-022-02315-x ***(UOG)***

UOG regents begins search for 12th president

The University of Guam Board of Regents has formally begun the search for the institution's 12th President.

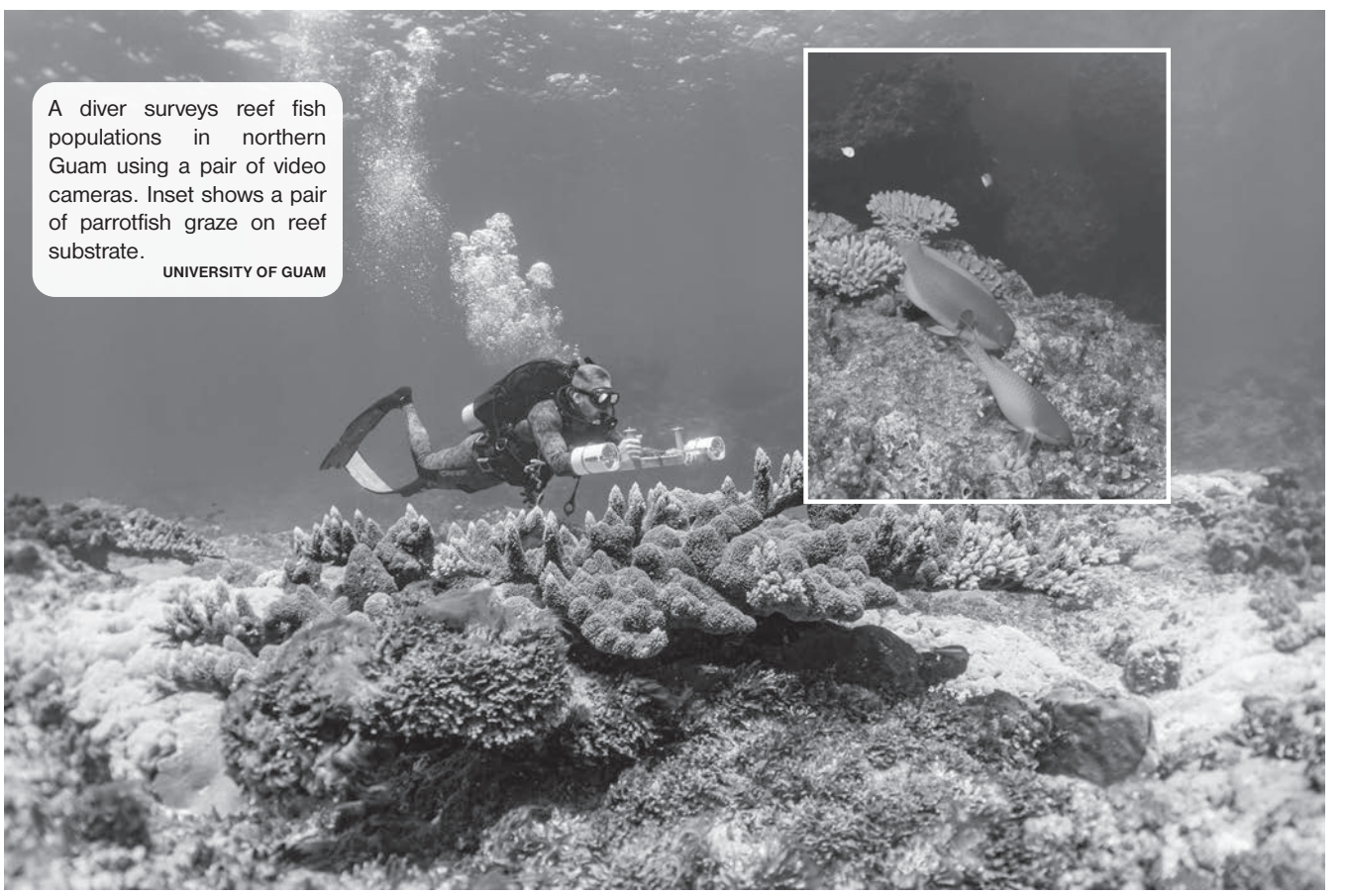
Candidates must have:

Krise

- a terminal degree from a recognized institution of learning;
- five years of experience in senior academic leadership at or above the level of dean or director or comparable professional executive experience;
- knowledge and understanding of the people of Guam and Micronesia and demonstrated experience in working on islands or geographically isolated communities;
- training and experience in research, teaching, or the administration of higher education or similar discipline; and
- evidence of distinguished teaching, scholarship, community engagement, research, publication, and/or professional excellence and achievement, nationally and/or internationally

Thomas W. Krise, the institution's 11th chief executive, is retiring at the end of his five-year term in August 2023.

For more information, updates on the process, and to apply for the position, visit https://www.uog.edu/presidential-search. ***(UOG)***



A diver surveys reef fish populations in northern Guam using a pair of video cameras. Inset shows a pair of parrotfish graze on reef substrate.

UNIVERSITY OF GUAM

Business

Nitrox device helps Green Flash Dive fight the bends

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

While up-and-coming football players aspire to bend it like Beckham, the bends are not exactly welcome in diving.

That's why Green Flash Dive has sought to limit decompression sickness among local divers by recently acquiring a nitrox machine.

And it's celebrating the occasion by having a promotion. Owner Rhea McDoulett said under the promotion, Green Flash Dive is offering an introductory price of $10 for oxygen-enriched air in standard tanks.

Nitrox refers to any gas mixture composed (except trace gasses) of nitrogen and oxygen. A nitrox machine reduces the proportion of nitrogen by increasing the proportion of oxygen and thus reduces the risk of decompression sickness on divers.

"As a mixture any increased level of oxygen allows the diver to have a less likelihood or risk of bends or any decompression," said Green Flash Dive co-owner Joey McDoulett.

While Green Flash Dive isn't the first to offer nitrox on Saipan, it is the first to acquire a nitrox machine on island when the equipment has become a standard in diving destinations in Micronesia like Palau.

"We introduced it because it is a safer alternative for the diver. It's safer for divers. In fact, in Palau, almost all of the divers use nitrox across the board, because it's easier for all of the dive companies because now they don't have to worry so much about their customer coming up and having a decompression injury. It's just safer," said Joey McDoulett, who is a lawyer by trade and dive instructor in his free time.

MARK RABAGO

Green Flash Dive owners Joey and Rhea McDoulett pose in front of their Chinatown dive shop.

MARK RABAGO

Green Flash Dive owner Rhea McDoulett shows of their brand new nitrox machine.

Aside from safety concerns, nitrox also affords dive shops and their divers more opportunities to book dives with their clients.

"It also makes it less fatiguing, less tiring, because part of the symptoms that you get from diving on regular air is after a three-dive day you're already tired," he added.

Rhea McDoulett, who is a 20-year veteran of the diving industry, said Green Flash Dive ordered the nitrox machine in 2018 even before the COVID-19 pandemic brought tourism to a standstill in the CNMI. Its purchase got delayed because of Super Typhoon Yutu and the aforementioned pandemic.

And while most dive shops closed during the pandemic, Green Flash Dive remained in operation as it supplies air and other equipment to not only dive shops but dive enthusiasts in general, including scientists from the U.S. mainland who dive as part of their work.

"Well, even the dive shops themselves still need to do things even when they don't have many tourists. They were still diving. They have their equipment that needs to be fixed and I know some of them offered it to the locals for a great discount just to keep things going," said Rhea McDoulett.

She did admit that the closing of most dive shops deprived them of a lion's share of their business, but they're still happy to have survived the past couple of years.

Opened in 2017, Green Flash Dive is named after the majestic natural phenomenon that occurs whenever the sun sets. The McDouletts said they named their company that because they simply love a green flash.

Aside from providing nitrox, regular air, and all sorts of diving equipment, Green Flash Dive is also the only company in the CNMI to provide hydro testing.

"So all tanks, not just scuba tanks, but all pressurized tanks including those used in the hospital and used by firemen have to be tested every five years and that's also what we do," said Rhea McDoulett.

Green Flash Dive is open everyday from 7am to 6pm. For more information call 670-287-3243 or 670-233-3243 or email them at rhea@greenflashdive.com.

MARK RABAGO

Green Flash Dive is currently offering an introductory price of $10 for oxygen-enriched air in standard tanks.

Nation

Tyre Nichols beating raises scrutiny on 'elite' cop units

By CLAUDIA LAUER
ASSOCIATED PRESS

A car with dark tinted windows circles the block a few times before swerving onto the sidewalk. A handful of armed plainclothes police officers jump out and order everyone out of a double-parked car so they can search it, striking terror in the seconds before red and blue lights flash or an officer yells "police."

A similar scene plays out in dozens of cities across the country every day.

The beating and death of Tyre Nichols by five former Memphis police officers who were members of an anti-crime task force has renewed scrutiny on such squads, which frequently wear street clothes and often are involved in a disproportionate number of violent incidents and civilian complaints. Memphis police officials—after initially defending the SCORPION unit—permanently disbanded the team Saturday just hours after the release of video that showed immediate and prolonged aggression from its officers.

Police department leaders across the country bill the specialty squads as "elite" units of officers sent into neighborhoods as a direct response to an increase in specific crimes, often arguing they are a tool to dedicate additional resources.

But policing reform advocates and people who live in the Black and brown neighborhoods that these units usually patrol often say the officers employ aggressive tactics sometimes bordering on brutality, have little oversight and use pretextual stops of cars and pedestrians alike to search for larger crimes.

"Obviously it's a complicated issue, and they are responding to a tangible problem being whatever crime of the day they are formed to address — guns, gang violence, narcotics. But Memphis is not an outlier here," said Hans Menos, vice president of the Triage Response Team at the Center for Policing Equity. "I don't see any other option we have as a country but to say this is not working. This is leading to pain, injury and death."

Menos, who led Philadelphia's Police Advisory Commission, the former civilian oversight arm of the police department, said the units often are judged only on results without questions about how those were gained.

Less than a year before Nichols was killed, four officers from a similar plainclothes unit in Philadelphia tasked with getting illegal guns off the street initiated a stop in an unmarked car of two juveniles on bikes.

Department leaders have said the officers turned on their flashing lights before 12-year-old Thomas T.J. Siderio, allegedly fired a shot at the car. One of the officers chased down Siderio, fatally shooting him in the back as he fled. Prosecutors who charged that officer with murder said the boy was unarmed when he was shot.

But there were warning signs in Philadelphia that task force officers were acting aggressively or recklessly for months before the shooting —including car wrecks and citizen complaints.

Police leaders in several departments have argued that the high number of complaints and violent incidents in these squads are due to the exact work they are asked to do—interrupt patterns of dangerous crime often involving guns or drugs.

In Memphis, police Director Cerelyn "CJ" Davis started the Street Crimes Operations to Restore Peace In Our Neighborhoods unit when she took over the department in 2021. The team of about 40 officers was designed to focus on repeat violent offenders after three years of rising violence in the city, including a record number of homicides in 2021.

Anti-abortion activists aim to sway GOP White House hopefuls

CHICAGO (AP)—Emboldened anti-abortion activists are looking to the 2024 presidential election as an opportunity to solidify their influence over the Republican Party.

Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, the most influential group in the anti-abortion movement, is telling each potential GOP presidential hopeful that to win its backing — or avoid being a target of its opposition — they must support national restrictions on the procedure. Exceptions in cases of rape, incest or to save the life of the mother are acceptable, the activists say, but leaving the question for states to decide is not.

"It is a level of protection that goes to every single state. That's the baseline of what we're looking to do," said Frank Cannon, Susan B. Anthony's chief political strategist. "Anything less than that will not be acceptable and will not be somebody that SBA can support. So, it's that simple."

That directive is creating an early litmus test for Republicans considering entering the first presidential election since the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, the landmark decision that enshrined federal protections for abortion for roughly 50 years. While the hard-line stance could please anti-abortion activists who hold sway in GOP primaries, it could create problems for the party's eventual nominee in the general election.

Voters protected abortion rights via ballot measures in six states in 2022, including Kansas, a state former President Donald Trump twice won by double-digit margins. AP VoteCast, a survey of the midterm electorate, showed the Supreme Court's decision was broadly unpopular. About 6 in 10 said they were angry or dissatisfied by it, and roughly the same percentage said they favor a law guaranteeing access to legal abortion nationwide.

Supporters of abortion rights say the issue was a "game changer" that helped Democrats last year and that will motivate voters even more in 2024, after two years of seeing the effects of restrictions.

"We're in a nation where 18 states have no access to abortion, and that number is not going down. It's going to go up as additional court cases get decided," said Jenny Lawson, vice president of organizing and engagement campaigns at Planned Parenthood Action Fund. She predicted people will see headlines "over and over again" about pregnant children forced to travel out of state for abortions or people unable to get proper miscarriage care because doctors are afraid of liability.

Pressure from the anti-abortion movement has put Trump, who announced his third run for the presidency last year, in perhaps the most complicated position.

He is arguably more responsible for the overturning of Roe than anyone else, having appointed three anti-abortion Supreme Court justices who backed last year's ruling. But he has also made clear that he believes pushing any further will hurt Republicans, and he accused anti-abortion leaders of failing to do enough to help GOP candidates in the midterms.

Asia

Pakistan bombing raises fears over security breach, 100 dead

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP)—Pakistani authorities scrambled on Tuesday to determine how a suicide bomber was able to carry out one of the country's deadliest militant attacks in years, unleashing an explosion in a crowded mosque inside a highly secured police compound in the city of Peshawar. The death toll from the blast climbed to 100.

Monday morning's bombing, which left at least 225 wounded, raised alarm among officials over a major security breach at a time when the Pakistani Taliban, the main anti-government militant group, has stepped up attacks, particularly targeting the police and the military.

In a televised speech to parliament Tuesday, Defense Minister Khawaja Mohammad Asif accused the Pakistani Taliban, known by the acronym TTP, of carrying out the attack, saying they were operating from neighboring Afghan territory and demanding the Afghan Taliban take action against them. A TTP commander earlier claimed responsibility, but a spokesman for the group later distanced the TTP from the carnage, saying it was not its policy to attack mosques.

More than 300 worshippers were praying in the Sunni mosque, with more approaching, when the bomber set off his explosives vest, officials said. The blast blew off part of the roof, and what was left caved in, injuring many more, according to Zafar Khan, a police officer.

Rescuers worked through the night and into Tuesday morning, removing mounds of debris to reach worshippers still trapped under the rubble. The death toll rose as more bodies were found and several of the critically injured died, said Mohammad Asim, a government hospital spokesman in Peshawar.

Most of the victims were police officers, he said.

Counter-terrorism police are investigating how the bomber was able to reach the mosque, which is inside a walled-off police headquarters compound called Police Lines. The compound is located in a heavily security district of Peshawar that includes other government buildings.

"Yes, it was a security lapse," said Ghulam Ali, the provincial governor in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, of which Peshawar is the capital.

Akhtar Ali Shah, a former regional interior secretary once based in Peshawar, said it "was not a spur of the moment attack."

"It was the handiwork of a well-organized group," he told The Associated Press. He said those behind the attack must have had inside help to gain access to the compound and probably entered it several times for reconnaissance or even to plant explosives ahead of time.

"It's not a security lapse, it's a security breach," he said. "From all entry points, there are multiple layers of security you have to cross" with ID checks.

U.S. National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson condemned the attack in Peshawar. "Terrorism is indefensible, and to target worshippers is unconscionable. The United States stands ready to provide support to Pakistan in its efforts to recover and rebuild," she said.

Speaking to parliament, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah Khan said investigators suspect that the bomber was helped by someone from the families of government employees who live on the compound near the mosque. He said 97 of the 100 dead were members of the police and 27 police officers remain in critical condition.

Austin in Philippines to discuss larger US military presence

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin is in the Philippines on Wednesday for talks about deploying U.S. forces and weapons in more Philippine military camps to ramp up deterrence against China's increasingly aggressive actions toward Taiwan and in the disputed South China Sea.

Austin flew Tuesday night to Manila from South Korea, where he met his counterpart and said the U.S. would increase its deployment of advanced weapons such as fighter jets and bombers to the Korean Peninsula to bolster joint training with South Korean forces in response to North Korea's growing nuclear threat.

The Philippines, Washington's oldest treaty ally in Asia, has been a key front in the U.S. battle against terrorism, especially after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. Austin was scheduled to meet a small contingent of U.S. counterterrorism forces on Wednesday in the south, where they have provided intelligence and combat advice for years to Filipino troops battling a decadeslong Muslim insurgency, which has considerably eased but remains a key threat.

More recently, U.S. forces have intensified and broadened joint training for combat readiness and disaster response with Filipino troops in the Southeast Asian nation's western coast, which faces the South China Sea, and in its northern Luzon region across the sea from the Taiwan Strait.

American forces have been granted access to five Philippine military camps, where they could stay indefinitely in rotating batches under a 2014 defense pact called the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement.

In October, the U.S. sought access to a larger number of its forces and weapons to an additional five Philippine military camps, mostly in the main northern Luzon region, under the 2014 EDCA. That request would be high on the agenda for Austin's meetings in the Philippines, according to Philippine officials.

"The visit of Secretary Austin definitely, obviously will have to do with many of the ongoing discussions on the EDCA sites," Philippine Ambassador to Washington Jose Romualdez said at a news briefing Tuesday in the capital Manila.

Austin would hold talks Thursday with his Philippine defense counterpart, Carlito Galvez Jr., and National Security Adviser Eduardo Ano, Romualdez said. Austin would separately call on President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who took office in June and has since taken steps to boost relations with Washington.

The U.S. defense chief is the latest American leader to visit the Philippines after Vice President Kamala Harris, who flew to the country in November in a sign of warming ties after a strained period under Marcos's predecessor, Rodrigo Duterte.

During his time at the country's helm from 2016, Duterte nurtured cozy ties with China and Russia while he threatened to sever ties with Washington, kick visiting American forces out and abrogate a major defense pact that allows thousands of U.S. forces to visit each year for large-scale combat training.

Romualdez said the Philippines needed to cooperate with Washington militarily to deter any escalation of tensions between China and Taiwan—not only because of the treaty alliance but to help prevent a major conflict.

World

Ukraine pushes for Western fighter jets after tank deals

AP

French Defense Minister Sebastien Lecornu, center right, and Ukrainian Minister of Defense Oleksii Reznikov pose during Reznikov's official visit at the French Defense Ministry, in Paris Tuesday, Jan. 31, 2023.

KYIV, Ukraine (AP)—Ukraine won support Tuesday from Baltic nations and Poland in its quest to obtain Western fighter jets, but there were no signs that larger nations like the U.S. and Britain have changed their stance of refusing to provide warplanes to Kyiv after almost a year of battling Russia's invading forces.

"Ukraine needs fighter jets ... missiles, tanks. We need to act," Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Reinsalu said in the Latvian capital of Riga at a news conference with his Baltic and Polish colleagues. Those countries, which lie on NATO's eastern flank, feel especially threatened by Russia and have been the leading advocates for providing military aid.

Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov held talks with his French counterpart, saying they did not discuss specific fighter jets, but they did talk about aviation "platforms" to help Ukraine's ground-to-air defense.

"I don't know how quick it will be, this response from Western allies" to Kyiv's requests for fighter jets, Reznikov said. "I'm optimistic and I think it will be as soon as possible."

He also listed weapons Ukraine has sought in the past year, starting with Stingers, and said the first response was always, "Impossible.'' Eventually though, he said, "it became possible.''

French Defense Minister Sebastien Lecornu, speaking with Reznikov, said there are "no taboos" on sending fighter jets. He also confirmed France is sending 12 more Caesar cannons in the coming weeks.

French President Emmanuel Macron said Monday that France doesn't exclude sending fighter jets but set out conditions before such a step is taken, including not leading to an escalation of tensions or using the aircraft "to touch Russian soil," and not resulting in weakening "the capacities of the French army."

Reznikov's trip came a week after Western nations pledged to send Kyiv sophisticated modern tanks.

Several Western leaders have expressed concern that providing warplanes could escalate the conflict and draw them in deeper.

WORLD BRIEFS

4 key suspects in Haiti presidential slaying in US custody

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP)—Four key suspects in the killing of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse were transferred to the United States for prosecution as the case stagnates in Haiti amid death threats that have spooked local judges, U.S. officials announced Tuesday. The suspects now in custody of the U.S. government include James Solages, 37, and Joseph Vincent, 57, two Haitian-Americans who were among the first arrested after Moïse was shot 12 times at his private home near the capital of Port-au-Prince on July, 7 2021. Also charged is Christian Emmanuel Sanon, an elderly pastor, doctor and failed businessman that authorities have identified as a key player. His associates have suggested he was duped by the real—and still unidentified—masterminds behind the assassination that has plunged Haiti deep into political chaos and unleashed a level of gang violence not seen in decades. The fourth suspect was identified as Colombian citizen Germán Rivera García, 44, who is among nearly two dozen former Colombian soldiers charged in the case.

Palestinians face removal as far-right Israel vows expansion

KHAN AL-AHMAR, West Bank (AP)—Protesters streaming up the windswept hills east of Jerusalem interrupted Maha Ali's breakfast.

Palestinian chants of support for her West Bank Bedouin community of Khan al-Ahmar, at risk of demolition by the Israeli army since it lost its legal protection over four years ago, drowned out the singing birds and bleating sheep. While intended to encourage the village, last week's solidarity rally unsettled Ali. Israeli politicians assembled on the opposite hill for a counter protest, calling for Khan al-Ahmar's immediate evacuation. "Why are they all back here now? Did something happen?" Ali asked her sister, gazing toward a swarm of TV journalists. "Four years of quiet and now this chaos again." The long-running dispute over Khan al-Ahmar has resurfaced as a focus of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with a legal deadline looming and Israel's new far-right ministers pushing the government to fulfill a Supreme Court-sanctioned commitment from 2018 to wipe the village off the map. Israel contends that the hamlet, home to nearly 200 Palestinians and an EU-funded school, was built illegally on state land.

Environment

AI: World likely to hit key warming threshold in 10-12 years

By SETH BORENSTEIN
AP SCIENCE WRITER

The world will likely breach the internationally agreed-upon climate change threshold in about a decade, and keep heating to break through a next warming limit around mid-century even with big pollution cuts, artificial intelligence predicts in a new study that's more pessimistic than previous modeling.

The study in Monday's journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences reignites a debate on whether it's still possible to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, as called for in the 2015 Paris climate agreement, to minimize the most damaging effects of climate change. The world has already warmed 1.1 or 1.2 degrees since pre-industrial times, or the mid-19th century, scientists say.

Two climate scientists using machine learning calculated that Earth will surpass the 1.5 degree (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) mark between 2033 and 2035. Their results fit with other, more conventional methods of predicting when Earth will break the mark, though with a bit more precision.

"There will come a time when we call the 1.5C target for maximum warming dead, beyond the shadow of a doubt," Brown University environment institute director Kim Cobb, who wasn't part of the study, said in an email interview. "And this paper may be the beginning of the end of the 1.5C target."

Stanford University's Noah Diffenbaugh, a study co-author, said the world is on the brink of the 1.5-degree mark in "any realistic emissions reduction scenario." Avoiding a 2-degree rise, he said, may depend on nations meeting zero-emissions goals by the middle of this century.

AP

Demonstrators pretend to resuscitate the Earth while advocating for the 1.5 degree warming goal to survive at the COP27 U.N. Climate Summit, Nov. 16, 2022, in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

The artificial intelligence-based study found it unlikely that temperature increase could be held below 2 degrees Celsius, even with tough emissions cuts. And that's where the AI really differs with scientists who had been forecasting using computer models that are based on past observations, Diffenbaugh said.

In a high-pollution scenario, the AI calculated, the world would hit the 2-degree mark around 2050. Lower pollution could stave that off until 2054, the machine learning calculated.

In contrast, the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change figured in its 2021 report that the same lower-pollution scenario would see the world pushing past 2 degrees sometime in the 2090s.

Cornell University climate scientist Natalie Mahowald, who wasn't part of the Diffenbaugh study but was part of the IPCC, said the study makes sense, fits with what scientists know, but seems a bit more pessimistic.

There's a lot of power in using AI and in the future that may be shown to produce better projections, but more evidence is needed before concluding that, Mahowald said.

Normally, climate scientists use a bunch of computer model simulations, some running hot and some cold, and then try to figure out which ones are doing the best job. That's often based on how they performed in the past or in simulations of the past, Diffenbaugh said. What the AI does is more keyed to the climate system now, he said.

"We're using this very powerful tool that is able to take information and integrate it in a way that no human mind is able to do, for better or for worse," Diffenbaugh said.

Each year, government climate negotiators at a United Nations summit proclaim that they have managed to "keep 1.5 alive." But with the latest study there's a divide among scientists on how true that really is. Diffenbaugh said there's been so much warming already that it really doesn't matter how pollution is cut in the next several years, the world will hit 1.5, the AI figures.

Zeke Hausfather of the tech company Stripe and Berkeley Earth, who was not part of the study, agreed, saying it's time to "stop pretending" that limiting warming to 1.5 degrees is possible. Some scenarios do see temperatures warming past the mark but then coming back down, something called "overshoot."

Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia do little to solve garbage problem

PRIBOJ, Serbia (AP)—In southwest Serbia, construction machines are being repurposed to clear tons of waste clogging the Potpec lake.

Year after year during the winter months, the lake near the southwest Serbian town of Priboj fills with tons of garbage such as plastic bottles, rusty barrels, dead animals and even furniture or home appliances.

That's because the Lim river feeding into the lake swells during the winter months and sweeps up trash from dozens of illegal landfills along its banks, as it flows from Montenegro to Serbia.

It's much the same in neighboring Bosnia's Drina river into which the Lim eventually flows. The problem spans decades and stems from poor waste management and a general lack of environmental protection safeguards across the Balkans.

Workers clearing the garbage with small cranes at the Potpec lake this week said the machines often break down because there is simply too much trash. Moreover, the cranes just weren't designed to pick up large chunks of wood or heavy washing machines from the water.

"You would not believe the things people throw into the river," said Milan Visic, a tugboat pilot. "It is in fact much better now than it was before because we cleaned up a lot."

The workers say they have collected some 10,000 cubic meters (more than 353,000 cubic feet) of waste since early December. But their job is far from over as much more garbage remains piled up in the lake. .

Officials from Serbia, Bosnia and Montenegro have on several occasions pledged to work together to solve the problem affecting their shared rivers but little has been done in reality.

All three countries are aspiring to join the European Union and are expected to do more for to protect their environment if their accession bids are to move forward. Another pressing issue is the extremely high level of air pollution affecting a number of cities in the region.

The garbage problem is evident everywhere - piles of waste dot hills and valleys, trash lines roads and plastic bags twist from tree branches. Compounding the problem is that collected trash is simply dumped in a landfill and recyclables are hardly ever seperated.

Environmental activists say tough action is needed now.

"For a start, heavy fines should be slapped," for throwing waste around, said Sinisa Lakovic of the local Jastreb group.

Plastic as art? Entire grocery store created from discards

ANN ARBOR, Mich. (AP)—A grocery store featuring thousands of faux food items made entirely from discarded plastic bags opens Tuesday to the public, an artist's non-edible creation calling attention to the dangers of plastic waste.

The Plastic Bag Store is a custom-built public art installation and film experience designed to encourage visitors to think more about the enduring impact of single-use plastics.

The store in Ann Arbor, Michigan, features shelves stocked with items such as meat, eggs and cakes, all made from single-use plastics taken from streets and garbage dumps.

The store at times during the day will be transformed into a stage for a series of short films in which puppetry and handmade sets are used to tell a story of the dangers of plastic waste and the consequences for future generations.

As the show's tagline puts it: "Part installation. Part film. All bags."

Plastic bags are created by fossil fuels and often end up as waste in landfills and oceans.

Americans toss out 100 billion plastic bags per year, according to Worldwatch Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based environmental research organization.

Theater and film director Robin Frohardt is the driving creative force behind the Plastic Bag Store.

"I got the idea many years ago after watching someone bag and double-bag and triple-bag my groceries," Frohardt said Tuesday. "I just was sort of struck by how ridiculous how much packaging is involved in our everyday lives.

"And it just seemed so absurd. I just thought, 'Maybe I could make a project that's even more absurd.' "

The store's shelves are lined with items whose names are intended to mimic real-life products such as "Yucky Shards" (Lucky Charms), "Bitz of Plastic Crap" (Ritz Crackers), "Bagemite" (Vegemite) and "Filthydelphia roll" (Philadelphia roll).

One product Frohardt didn't have to alter was baguettes, "because it was already in the name," she said with a laugh.

The Plastic Bag Store, which runs through Feb. 5, is presented via a partnership between the University of Michigan Museum of Art, University Musical Society, University of Michigan Arts Initiative and Graham Sustainability Institute.

Tickets are $30 for general admission. Student tickets cost $12.

The show premiered in Times Square in 2020. It since has made stops in Los Angeles; Chicago; Austin, Texas; and Adelaide, Australia.

"I hope that we can continue to tour this project and bring it to different communities," said Frohardt, who is based in New York. "My dream would be that this project becomes irrelevant.

"But it probably won't be."

Endangered rhino poaching nearly doubled in Namibia in 2022

WINDHOEK, Namibia (AP)—Rhino poaching in Namibia increased dramatically last year, with nearly twice as many of the critically endangered animals killed than the year before, the country's environment ministry says.

The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism released figures on Monday showing that 87 rhinos were poached in 2022, up from 45 in 2021.

It was "a serious concern," the ministry said.

Of the 87 rhinos poached last year, 61 were black rhinos and 26 white rhinos, the ministry said. And 46 of those rhinos were poached at the Etosha National Park, Namibia's flagship game reserve.

Namibia has more than one-third of the world's black rhinos and the Etosha National Park is home to the biggest single black rhino population, according to the Save The Rhino organization.

Save The Rhino estimates there are approximately 6,000 black rhinos left and around 15,000 white rhinos. Those two species are only found in the wild in Africa.

Conservation groups have warned that the economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic could undermine efforts to stop poaching.

Life & Style

Manslaughter charge for Alec Baldwin in 'Rust' set shooting

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP)—Actor Alec Baldwin and a weapons specialist have been formally charged with involuntary manslaughter in the fatal shooting of a cinematographer on a New Mexico movie set, according to court documents filed by prosecutors Tuesday.

Santa Fe District Attorney Mary Carmack-Altwies filed the charging documents naming Baldwin and Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, who supervised weapons on the set of the Western "Rust," and outlined evidence that they deviated repeatedly from known safety standards.

Baldwin

Halyna Hutchins died shortly after being wounded during rehearsals at a ranch on the outskirts of Santa Fe on Oct. 21, 2021. Baldwin was pointing a pistol at Hutchins when the gun went off, killing her and wounding the director, Joel Souza.

Prosecutors have said that Baldwin's involvement as a producer and as the person who fired the gun weighed in the decision to file charges.

In recent weeks, Carmack-Altwies outlined two sets of involuntary manslaughter charges in connection with the shooting.

The manslaughter charge filed Tuesday against Baldwin and Gutierrez-Reed includes two alternative standards and sanctions.

One version would require proof of negligence, which is punishable by up to 18 months in jail and a $5,000 fine under New Mexico law.

The second alternative is for reckless disregard of safety "without due caution and circumspection." It carries a higher threshold of wrongdoing and includes a "firearm enhancement" that could result in a mandatory five years in prison because the offense was committed with a gun.

Prosecutors have said a jury may ultimately decide which definition of manslaughter to pursue.

A probable cause statement outlining evidence against Baldwin alleges many instances of "extremely reckless acts" or reckless failures to take precautions in the days and minutes leading up to the deadly shooting.

Investigators say that Baldwin drew a revolver from a holster, pointed it at Hutchins and fired the weapon when a plastic or replica gun should have been used by industry standards.

It says photos and videos of the rehearsal, including moments before the deadly shooting, showed Baldwin with his finger inside the trigger guard and on the trigger while "manipulating" the pistol's hammer, and that an FBI analysis shows the pistol could not be fired without pressing the trigger.

Investigators say Baldwin failed to appear for mandatory firearms training prior to filming, and that he didn't fully complete on-set training while distracted by phone calls to family. They also cite several breaches of required safety-checks and protocols as the gun was loaded and provided to Baldwin.

Baldwin and Gutierrez-Reed maintain their innocence and have vowed to fight the charges.

Baldwin's attorney Luke Nikas declined comment Tuesday and referred to his previous statement on the case, in which he called the charges a "terrible miscarriage of justice" that he and his client would fight and win.

Will Smith, Martin Lawrence reteaming for 'Bad Boys' sequel

NEW YORK (AP)—Will Smith and Martin Lawrence are reteaming for a fourth "Bad Boys" movie, in one of Smith's most high-profile new projects since the slap.

AP
Co-stars Will Smith, left, and Martin Lawrence appear at a photo call for their film "Bad Boys for Life", in Paris on Jan. 6, 2020.

Sony Pictures announced Tuesday that the untitled "Bad Boys" sequel is in early preproduction. In a video posted on Instagram, Smith filmed himself driving to Lawrence's house. Embracing at the door, Smith exclaims, "It's about that time!"

Development on the "Bad Boys" sequel, which follows 2020's "Bad Boys for Life," was reportedly put on hold after Smith hit Chris Rock at last March's Academy Awards. But last May, Sony Pictures chief Tom Rothman disputed those reports.

"There weren't any brakes to pump because the car wasn't moving," said Rothman. "That was a very unfortunate thing that happened, and I don't think it's really my place to comment, except to say that I've known Will Smith for many years, and I know him to be a good person. That was an example of a very good person having a very bad moment, in front of the world. I believe his apology and regret is genuine, and I believe in forgiveness and redemption."

Shortly before the pandemic shuttered theaters, "Bad Boys for Life" was a box-office hit, grossing $426 million worldwide. Producer Jerry Bruckheimer is returning for the fourth film, as are "Bad Boys For Life" directors Adil El Arbi and Bilall Fallah.

Three rappers missing for days since Detroit gig was scratched

DETROIT (AP)—Three aspiring rappers who met in prison have been missing for 10 days after a Detroit gig suddenly was canceled because of an equipment problem, police said.

"We just have a whole lot of unanswered questions that we're trying to find the answer to," Cmdr. Michael McGinnis said Monday. "The fact that the three of them are missing together is very concerning and very alarming for us."

The men, who live in Michigan, were identified as Armani Kelly, Montoya Givens and Dante Wicker.

They were scheduled to perform at a party at Lounge 31 in Detroit on Jan. 21, but the appearance was canceled.

Kelly's fiancée said phone calls, text messages and social media contacts have not been answered since that night.

"I just beg for help, for anything. I need answers and, if it comes to it, I need closure, because I will never forget and I will never stop," Taylor Perrin said.

She said Kelly was working, taking college classes and polishing his rap skills—a turnaround after a robbery case.

"Armani did his time and came out as a whole new person," Perrin told The Detroit News.

McGinnis said police are checking license plate readers and security video to try to solve the mystery.

"I'm confident that using those tools will help us get the answers that these families deserve," he said.

Widow finds happiness with high school sweetheart

DEAR ABBY: My husband of 37 years passed away four months ago. When we were first married, we were happy, but his drinking increased and he turned into a miserable, mean drunk. When I decided I'd finally had enough, he got sick and could no longer work, and I felt obligated to take care of him. More than a decade of my life was spent looking after him, for which he rarely, if ever, expressed appreciation.

One month after his funeral, I was contacted out of the blue by my high school sweetheart. I was reluctant to respond at first, but I decided it couldn't hurt to meet him and enjoy dinner and conversation. The attraction was immediate. It felt like we were back in high school. It has been three months now, and we are ready to take our relationship to the next level. He makes me feel better than I have ever felt in my life. My children know how miserable I was for decades in my marriage, but I'm still concerned about how they'll feel about me seriously dating so soon after becoming a widow.

LONGING FOR LOVE IN THE MIDWEST

DEAR LONGING: If you explain to your adult children that you and your friend from long ago have reconnected, they shouldn't react badly to the news. However, a word of caution: This is still a budding relationship. If by "taking the relationship to the next level" you mean becoming intimate, you are an adult long past the age of consent. However, if it means dashing off to marry this person, take more time before making a formal commitment. Doing that will enable you to observe how he reacts in a variety of situations—including whether you agree about issues you feel are important, as well as how he reacts when he's frustrated or angry.

■■■■

DEAR ABBY: I am a 55-year-old woman who had a few good jobs earlier in my career, which enabled me to buy a lovely townhouse in New England. I now work as a consultant, and I no longer earn the same kind of money I did back then. My problem: About 20 years ago, my parents borrowed money from me to fix their home so they could sell it. After it sold, not only did they not pay me back, but they moved in with me. It was supposed to be temporary, but they have been staying here rent-free for the last five years. In addition to my frustration with my parents, my sister (who is in her 40s) was living down south with her boyfriend when their relationship imploded. So she moved back to New England and moved in with us. She is not paying rent either and brought her two dogs with her. I am at my wits' end. Please give me some advice.

GOING BONKERS IN MASSACHUSETTS

DEAR GOING BONKERS: You have been patient and tolerant for far too long. You have been a pushover. Contact an attorney for help, because you may have to evict these relatives. Grow a backbone and TELL your parents you want them not only to move but to take your sister and her dogs with them. I SINCERELY hope you have something in writing memorializing the loan you gave your folks because, if you don't, you probably will not see that money again. (Sorry.)

■■■■

Good advice for everyone – teens to seniors – is in "The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It." To order, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

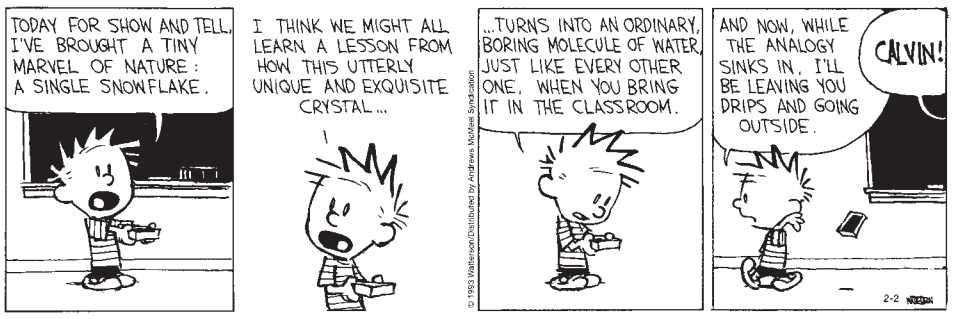
DEAR ABBY
By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


TODAY FOR SHOW AND TELL, I'VE BROUGHT A TINY MARVEL OF NATURE: A SINGLE SNOWFLAKE.
I THINK WE MIGHT ALL LEARN A LESSON FROM HOW THIS UTTERLY UNIQUE AND EXQUISITE CRYSTAL...
...TURNS INTO AN ORDINARY, BORING MOLECULE OF WATER, JUST LIKE EVERY OTHER ONE, WHEN YOU BRING IT IN THE CLASSROOM.
AND NOW, WHILE THE ANALOGY SINKS IN, I'LL BE LEAVING YOU DRIPS AND GOING OUTSIDE.
CALVIN!
2-2
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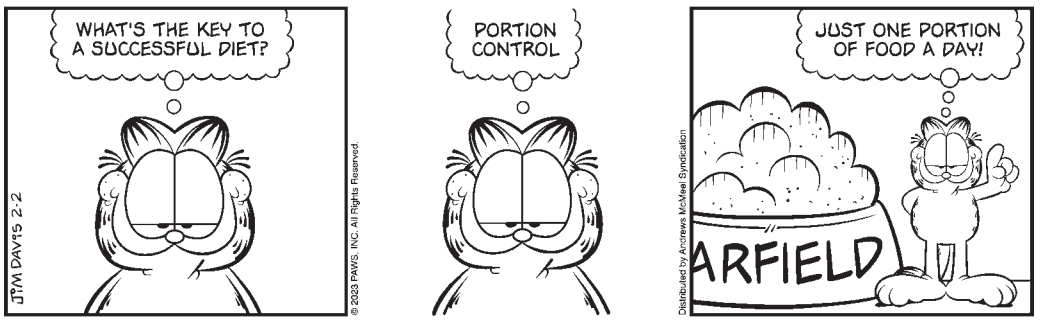
Garfield®

By Jim Davis


WHAT'S THE KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL DIET?
PORTION CONTROL
JUST ONE PORTION OF FOOD A DAY!
JIM DAVIS 2-2
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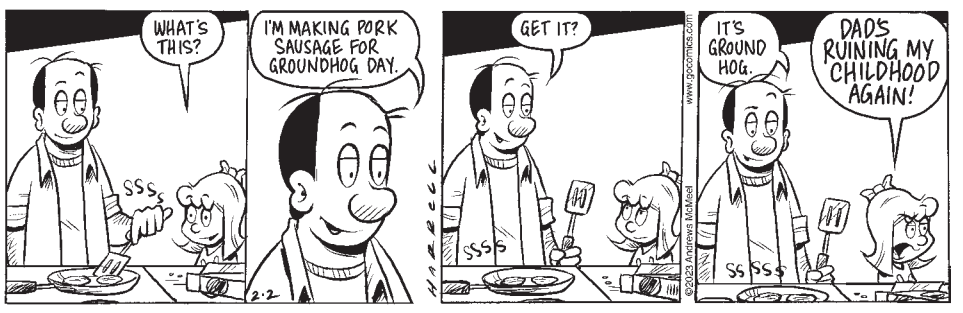
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Night-wear, for short
4 Test version
8 Galley supply
12 Chic no more
13 Air freshener target
14 Landed
15 Hoagy Carmichael song
17 Country singer Keith
18 King, in Cannes
19 Cat variety
21 Young feline
24 Before
25 Poetic tribute
26 Melancholy
28 "The Trial" author Franz
32 School session
34 Huge
36 Stead
37 Pesto herb
39 Part of MPH
41 Dog doc
42 Blue
44 Oscar winner Rita
46 Shoal
50 Reply (Abbr.)
51 Jet type
52 Hollywood notable
56 "Alfred" composer
57 Duel tool
58 Notre Dame coach
59 Disposition
60 Chiefs coach Andy
61 Fix illegally

DOWN

1 Not neg.
2 Protrude
3 Appetizers
4 Physiques
5 Sch. URL ender
6 Pitch
7 "Glee" guitarist
8 Breakfast bowlful
9 Lip balm ingredient
10 Barbecue order
11 Eyelid woe
16 Decay
20 Noah's boat
21 "Today" anchor Hoda
22 Concept
23 Collar
27 Quick swim
29 Top-quality
30 Acute
31 Car
33 "— Pierce" (HBO miniseries)
35 Tiara jewel
38 High tennis shot
40 Wandered
43 Thin cookie
45 Hosp. workers
46 Bridge coup
47 Sleek, in car lingo
48 iPod type
49 Mature
53 Muumuu accessory
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Solution time: 24 mins.

T	O	M		M	A	S	T		S	A	A	B
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S	U	E	Z	C	A	N	A	L		R	O	D
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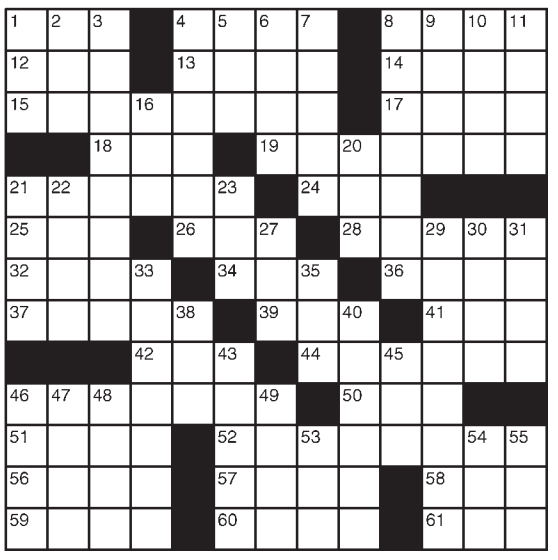
B	I	T	E		A	B	C	D		P	E	N

Yesterday's answer 2-2



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Shakira, 46; Christie Brinkley, 69; Brent Spiner, 74; Graham Nash, 81.

Happy Birthday: Your mind will be racing this year, but if you don't prepare and organize properly, you will miss your mark. Look at the possibilities and bring together what's most compatible. Make your energy work for you. Refuse to let situations spin out of control emotionally or cloud your vision. Spring forward. Your numbers are 7, 18, 20, 26, 37, 42, 48.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Think big, but don't overspend. Be open to ideas, but not at the expense of giving up on your dreams. Take pride in what you do and you will stimulate profit and growth. Distance yourself from emotional interference that clouds your vision. ✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Talk with someone you enjoy working with and a concrete plan will develop. A reunion or gathering will drum up feelings you once had for someone. Reach out and see where it leads. It's time to either embrace or let go of the past. ✪✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Do your thing, even out the playing field and make disciplined decisions that make a difference to your reputation and position. Refuse to let anyone take credit for something you do or say. Protect yourself and your assets from anyone pressuring you. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Share information, feelings and plans with someone special. Build your future with a goal in mind. Overreacting won't solve problems. Look for common ground and connect with people who can help make your dreams come true. Handle a romantic gesture with care. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Align yourself with the most reliable sources. Don't be shy; speak up, and your contributions will open doors that lead to new beginnings. Don't walk away from change; embrace what's available and make it your own. A partnership will require compromise. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Consider what you want and how best to make it happen. Plan a fun-filled day that will ignite your imagination. Create an exciting way to get things done in record time so you can move on to more desirable pastimes. ✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Shake off any negativity dragging you down. Set the record straight and map out your goals. Procrastination is the enemy, so gear up and show everyone what you can bring to the table. By setting new trends, your popularity will grow. ✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* You'll gain power if you are observant. Take note of how others treat you, and eliminate situations holding you back. Improve your image and how you present yourself to the world. Romance is favored, and a commitment looks promising. ✪✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Don't ignore trouble. Size up situations and protect yourself from anyone coming on too strong. If something doesn't sit right with you, take a pass and do your own thing. Avoid trips, meetings and situations that can put you in a compromising position. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Pressing matters will escalate if you don't take charge. Refuse to let anyone put demands on you. By asking questions, you'll learn how to move forward. An idea or concept you have has profitable potential. Apply your skills and follow your instincts. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Low-key works wonders in a tight situation. Don't poke the bear if you want others to listen. Offer something intelligent, concrete and forward-thinking. Take precautions and ward off injury or illness. A realistic attitude will lead to benefits. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Initiate activities with friends. Share your feelings and intentions, and a positive suggestion will follow. A trial run is a safe bet that leaves wiggle room for adjustments. Clear favors or debts owed before you proceed. Choose love over discord. ✪✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are cautious, adaptable and insightful. You are thoughtful and sincere.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

		6						4
		9		6		1	5	
7				5		8		
8		7	9	1		4		
		1	2	4			3	
9	2			7		6	1	
					7			3
2		8		3		7	6	9
			6		9			1

Difficulty: ★★★ 2-2

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesturday's Answer

5	4	7	6	8	2	3	9	1
8	9	6	1	4	3	7	2	5
1	2	3	9	5	7	6	4	8
4	6	5	8	9	1	2	3	7
3	1	9	2	7	5	8	6	4
2	7	8	3	6	4	1	5	9
6	5	1	4	2	8	9	7	3
9	3	4	7	1	6	5	8	2
7	8	2	5	3	9	4	1	6

Difficulty: ★★★ 2-1

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

CHRISTINE MCVIE (1943-2022) **Solution: 8 letters**

S	T	E	V	I	E	N	I	C	K	S	E	U	L	B
D	A	W	A	R	D	S	D	R	A	O	B	Y	E	K
O	L	V	E	S	O	N	G	W	R	I	T	E	R	C
N	B	L	E	G	L	P	E	R	F	E	C	T	H	K
S	U	A	I	M	D	O	S	A	R	A	L	A	H	C
E	M	H	S	T	E	A	W	T	M	T	I	M	E	A
M	I	T	I	C	T	S	B	D	J	N	V	S	R	H
A	C	U	T	T	A	L	O	D	O	O	E	R	O	S
G	K	O	A	O	M	O	E	T	L	W	H	O	I	N
E	V	B	N	P	W	A	C	L	R	O	N	N	T	E
R	O	O	N	T	U	S	K	Y	I	E	G	O	A	K
U	C	B	E	S	T	A	G	E	R	E	C	H	N	C
T	A	E	D	U	A	R	D	O	R	I	S	N	G	I
U	L	I	V	O	R	N	O	V	E	L	L	O	O	H
F	S	N	O	I	T	A	R	O	B	A	L	L	O	C

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Album, Anne, Awards, BASCA, Blues, Bob, Bouth, Chain, Chicken Shack, Collaborations, Concert, Cyril, Eduardo, Fleetwood Mac, Future Games, Gold Badge, Hero, Hitmaker, Honors, Ivor Novello, John, Keyboards, Little Lies, Live, Mick, Perfect, Sara, Save Me, Singer, Slow Down, Songwriter, Stage, Stevie Nicks, Tango, Time, Tusk, Vocals

Yesterday's Answer: Timing

The NEW **Volume 70** can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480.

James has triple-double, leads Lakers past Knicks in OT

NEW YORK (AP)—LeBron James will soon be the NBA's top scorer, though that was never his focus.

He's also one of the game's leading passers, and combining the two—possibly better than anyone ever—is what really makes him proud.

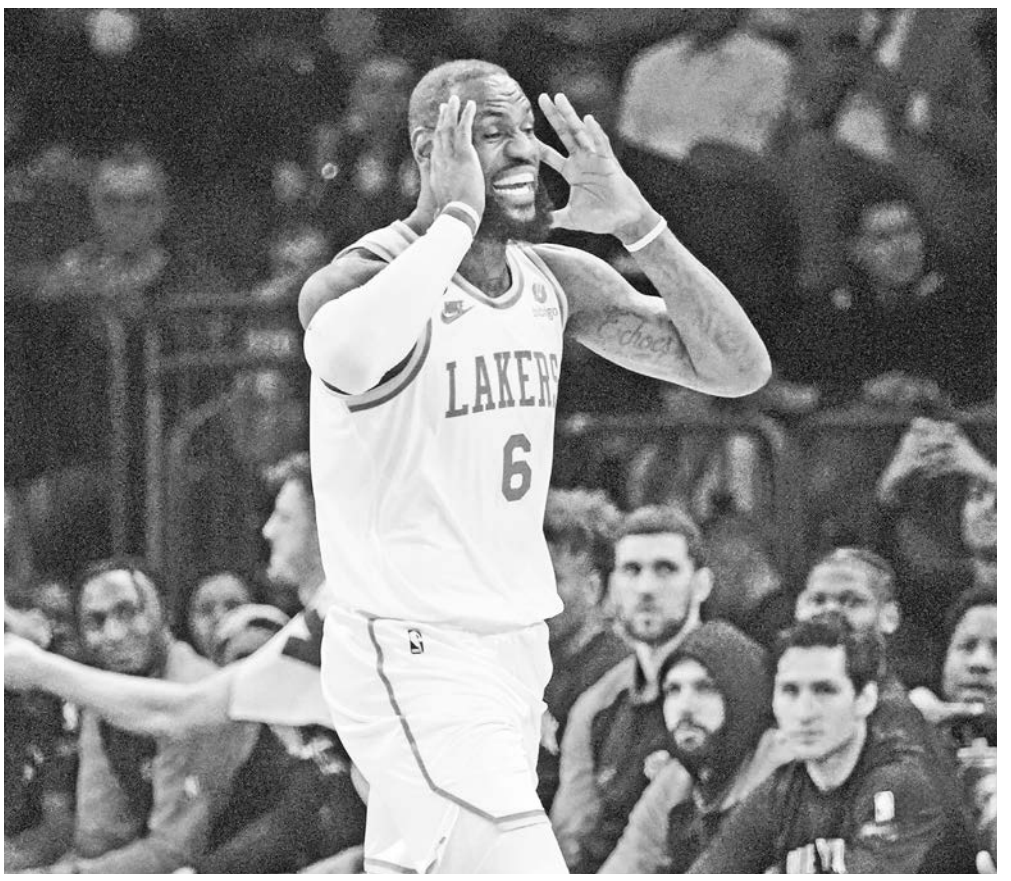
"I didn't get to this point in my career by thinking about records or how many points I have, whatever the case might be," James said. "I just play the game the right way. I approach the game every night only trying to be a triple threat by scoring, rebounding, assisting, defending, and may the chips fall where they may."

James moved within 89 points of breaking the career scoring record and climbed into fourth place on the assists list, finishing with his first triple-double of the season in his return to Madison Square Garden as the Los Angeles Lakers beat the New York Knicks 129-123 in overtime Tuesday night.

James had 28 points, 11 assists and 10 rebounds, with the points giving him 38,299 for his career. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar is the leader with 38,387.

But James' game has always been about more than scoring, as he proved again Tuesday. He fed Dennis Schroder for a 3-pointer that snapped a 118-all tie with 3:13 remaining, grabbed his 10th rebound later in the extra period and then powered to the basket for a 127-121 lead with 19 seconds to go.

"He's just doing it all," Lakers coach Darvin Ham said. "That's what great players do. That's what all-time greats do, and he's right up there at the top of the list with all of them."



AP

Los Angeles Lakers' LeBron James (6) reacts to a call during the second half of an NBA basketball game against the New York Knicks Tuesday, Jan. 31, 2023, in New York.

James had earlier moved ahead of Mark Jackson and then Steve Nash into fourth place on the assists list during his first game at Madison Square Garden in three years.

Anthony Davis added 27 points and nine rebounds for the Lakers, who had dropped two straight to open their trip. Both James and Davis had sat out their loss Monday in Brooklyn.

Jalen Brunson scored 37 points and Julius Randle had 23 points and 12 rebounds for the Knicks, who were 7 for 34 from 3-point range and dropped their second straight.

"We're scoring plenty, that's not our issue," Knicks coach Tom Thibodeau said. "So we've got to shore up our defense."

James was fuming following his last game, the' Lakers loss in overtime in Boston on Saturday, after which referees said they missed a foul on his drive to the basket to end regulation.

He then sat out Monday with what Ham said was left foot soreness, though the Lakers had listed the injury as an ankle. They listed him as questionable to play in the morning, then upgraded James to available after he moved well during a pregame workout.

He certainly didn't want to miss this one after being hurt two years ago and suspended last season for striking Detroit's Isaiah Stewart in the face. His last game here was Jan. 22, 2000, when he was days away from passing Kobe Bryant into third place on the career scoring list.

Now the only one left to catch is Abdul-Jabbar, which could happen in the next 10 days. James said getting closer doesn't make it feel any heavier.

"I'm not going anywhere, I'm going to be in this league for at least a few more years," he said. "So I'm going to do it, so it's not heavy at all."

The game was tied at 90 before James fed Troy Brown Jr. for a 3-pointer with his eighth assist, then set up Thomas Bryant for a dunk that moved him ahead of Jackson and then Nash into fourth place for assists. He has 10,338 assists.

James has always called MSG one of his favorite places to play and this visit draw a sellout crowd that included celebrities such as Michael J. Fox, Michael B. Jordan, Emma Stone and Chris Rock. Fans filled seats in the lower sections of the arena just to watch James warm up, but he struggled to give them one of his vintage performances once the game began.

He threw up an airball in the second quarter as part of his 2-for-8 start, but made his final two shots of the half, then threw a pass that Schroder heaved in from halfcourt to beat the buzzer and cut it to 53-52 at halftime.

Recently acquired Rui Hachimura had 19 points and nine rebounds for the Lakers, while Russell Westbrook added 17 points and eight assists, with three of them in OT.

NUGGETS 122, PELICANS 113

DENVER (AP)—Jamal Murray scored 32 points, Nikola Jokic had his 16th triple-double of the season and Denver held off reeling New Orleans.

Jokic finished with 26 points, 18 rebounds and 15 assists as the Western Conference leaders improved to 16-0 when Jokic has a triple-double. Murray made a season-high seven 3-pointers.

CJ McCollum and Herbert Jones each scored 21 points for the Pelicans. They have dropped nine straight games to finish 3-13 in January.

Part of the reason for the slide has been the absence of standout Zion Williamson, who has missed 15 straight games with a hamstring injury.

BUCKS 124, HORNETS 115

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Giannis Antetokounmpo had 34 points and 18 rebounds and Milwaukee beat Charlotte to win its fifth straight and avenge one of its most embarrassing losses of the season.

The Bucks withstood a triple-double from Charlotte's LaMelo Ball, who had 27 points, 11 assists and 10 rebounds.

Charlotte (16-36) entered the night with the fourth-worst record in the NBA, but the Hornets won 138-109 at Milwaukee on Jan. 6 to hand the Bucks their second-most lopsided loss of the season.

HEAT 100, CAVALIERS 97

CLEVELAND (AP)—Jimmy Butler scored 23 points, Bam Adebayo added 18 points and 11 rebounds and Miami beat Cleveland.

Caleb Martin scored 18 points and matched his career high with 10 rebounds, and Tyler Herro also had 18 points for the Heat. They moved within 1 1/2 games of the fifth-place Cavs in the Eastern Conference standings.

Evan Mobley scored 19 points for Cleveland.

CLIPPERS 108, BULLS 103

CHICAGO (AP)—Kawhi Leonard scored 33 points, Norman Powell added 27 and Los Angeles beat Chicago for its sixth victory in seven games.

Paul George added 16 points and 10 rebounds for the Clippers.

Nikola Vucevic had 23 points and 14 rebounds for Chicago.

Analysis: NBA All-Star reserve voting to lead to some snubs

By TIM REYNOLDS
AP Basketball Writer

Brace yourself. There's going to be some angry people in the NBA on Thursday night.

With good reason.

The votes from the coaches are now in, and on Thursday, the NBA will reveal the 14 players—seven from the Eastern Conference, seven more from the Western Conference—who got picked to be reserves for the All-Star Game.

They'll join the pool of 10 starters: the Los Angeles Lakers' LeBron James, Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo, Dallas' Luka Doncic, Boston's Jayson Tatum, Brooklyn teammates Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving, Golden State's Stephen Curry, Cleveland's Donovan Mitchell, Denver's Nikola Jokic and New Orleans' Zion Williamson.

And then the cries of snubbing will begin.

Let's start dissecting this mess with the East. Philadelphia's Joel Embiid is going to be an All-Star reserve, based on both common sense and the fact that NBA coaches wouldn't dare anger one of the league's most hard-to-guard players by not voting for him. Boston's Jaylen Brown, New York's Julius Randle and Miami's Bam Adebayo all should be All-Stars.

That's nine from the East. That leaves no more than three slots left for this group — Atlanta's Trae Young, Chicago's DeMar DeRozan and Zach LaVine, New York's Jalen Brunson, Miami's Jimmy Butler, Orlando's Paolo Banchero, Indiana's Tyrese Haliburton and Cleveland's Darius Garland. And all eight of those guys, plus some others, are all worthy candidates.

"Tyrese Haliburton is an artist," Pacers coach Rick Carlisle said earlier this season. "And you know, some people that have unconventional ways to be successful in this game, you have to just leave them alone and allow them to do what they do. His artistry is the way he gets the ball in the basket, the way he sees the game, the way he connects teammates and the special person that he is."

Sounds like an All-Star. A lot of coaches can make similar arguments for their guys, and not be lying when they make them.

You can see how messy this is going to get.

It might be even worse out West. Sacramento's Domantas Sabonis, Oklahoma City's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, Utah's Lauri Markkanen, Memphis' Ja Morant and Portland's Damian Lillard should be locks for reserve nods. The only question on the Lakers' Anthony Davis is if missing a bunch of games with injury will weigh on the minds of coaches; his numbers are more than good enough, except for that pesky "games played" column.

If Davis and those five other players make it, that leaves one spot on the West roster. ONE.

Phoenix's Devin Booker is averaging about 27 points a game. Minnesota's Anthony Edwards is averaging about 25 points a game. Sacramento's De'Aaron Fox is averaging about 24. Odds are, at least one of those guys will miss out on being picked Thursday night.

Maybe two. Maybe even all three.

Denver leads the Western Conference and should have more than one All-Star, so that suggests Aaron Gordon—who has been fantastic this season—will get a long look. An All-Star Game without Los Angeles Clippers teammates Paul George and Kawhi Leonard would make no sense, given how they're playing this season. But that could happen. New Orleans' CJ McCollum has averaged nearly 20 points per game in his career, is averaging a tick above that this season, and still hasn't been an All-Star. Coaches had to have considered Phoenix's Chris Paul for their ballots as well.

All we know for certain is there will be some very good players who didn't make the cut.

There were 56 players who entered this week averaging at least 20 points per game; not all were officially qualified for the NBA scoring-leader list because they hadn't played enough games to be eligible.

Simple math tells us this much: 56 players averaging 20 per game, and 24 spots on the All-Star rosters, means at least 32 of those guys are going to be on the outside looking in when the rest of the teams are revealed.

Put it this way: There will be enough "snubbed" guys out there that, if they were so inclined, they could all get together and play their own All-Star Game. And even then there would be a few players who wouldn't make a squad.

Coaches had a tough job to do, narrowing all the worthy candidates for All-Star reserve nods down to seven players from their conferences. A few guys who are left out Thursday will still probably find their way to the game; if anyone who was selected can't play because of injury — Williamson, for example, is currently out with a hamstring problem—then Commissioner Adam Silver will choose replacements.

It'll be an interesting ballot reveal, for certain.

Brother vs. brother: Kelces prepare for Super Bowl showdown

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP)—Donna Kelce is going to have to pull out that now-familiar custom jersey — the one with Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce's front stitched to Philadelphia Eagles center Jason Kelce's back—one more time this season.

At least this time, she'll get to see her boys in person.

For the first time in Super Bowl history, a pair of siblings will play each other on the NFL's grandest stage. Kelce helped the Chiefs return to their third championship game in four seasons on Sunday night when they beat the Bengals for the AFC title, while Jason has the Eagles back for the second time in six years after their NFC title win over the 49ers.

"Cool scenario to be in, you know?" Travis Kelce said. "My mom can't lose."

Or maybe can't win.

Indeed, there have been plenty of famous NFL siblings over the years, and many had some memorable matchups: Peyton vs. Eli Manning, Tiki vs. Ronde Barber. But they never reached the same Super Bowl, or had to put their dear old mom in such a predicament, where one will be hoisting the Lombardi Trophy at the other one's expense.

AP

Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce, left, talks to his brother, Philadelphia Eagles center Jason Kelce, after they exchanged jerseys following an NFL football game in Kansas City, Mo., Sept. 17, 2017.

"It's going to be an amazing feeling playing against him," added Travis, whose team has gotten the better of big brother's Eagles the last three matchups. "I respect everyone over there in the Eagles organization. You won't see me talk too much trash because of how much I love my brother. But it's going to be an emotional game, for sure."

Jason Kelce was even ever-so-briefly a Chiefs fan Sunday night, pulling on a Kansas City sweatshirt for about the three hours between the end of the Eagles' 31-7 rout of San Francisco and the finish of his little brother's 23-20 win over Cincinnati.

"That's it for the rest of the year," Jason said with a smile. "I am done being a Chiefs fan."

He'll leave that to mom and dad.

While her husband, Ed, has mostly kept private over the years, Donna has been a fixture as she crisscrosses the country to watch her boys. During wild-card weekend last year, she started in Tampa Bay watching the Eagles against the Buccaneers, then hopped a plane to Kansas City in time to watch the Chiefs play the Steelers at night.

She already has seen both of her sons win Super Bowls, too: The Eagles beat the Patriots in 2018 in Minneapolis, and the Chiefs rallied to beat the 49ers in Miami two years later.

She hasn't seen much of them lately, though. The way the playoff schedule worked out for the divisional round and the conference championship games, it was impossible for Donna to make it to see both of her boys in person.

In any case, they've come a long way from their solidly middle-class upbringing in Cleveland Heights, Ohio. Jason blazed the trail as the star offensive lineman who earned a scholarship to Cincinnati, and Travis soon followed suit. Both caught the eyes of NFL scout during their college careers, and of one coach in particular: Andy Reid.

It was Big Red who, while coaching the Eagles, used a sixth-round pick on Jason during the 2011 draft. And two years later, after Reid had gotten a fresh start in Kansas City, the Chiefs used a third-rounder to bring Travis into the fold.

"Big brother probably protected Travis from doing some crazy things. He probably talked him from dropping off a ladder into raked-up leaves once or twice," Reid said Monday. "Listen, they're both at heart very competitive and compassionate, is the biggest thing. They care and they care about people and they care about they're game."

They also happen to be very good at it.

Jason has been to six Pro Bowls and was just voted an All-Pro for the fifth time, and he's emerged as one of the best offensive linemen in Eagles history. Travis has been to eight Pro Bowls, just made a fourth All-Pro team and is second in NFL history to Jerry Rice in playoff catches, yards and touchdowns.

Football's not the only thing they're good at, either.

The brothers have new a podcast called "New Heights with Jason & Travis Kelce," which takes listeners on a riotous, real-time ride through the NFL season. The weekly shows are recorded on Tuesdays and last between 60 and 90 minutes, the two NFL stars playing off each other as if they were hanging out in mom's basement.

Special guests have included Eagles quarterback Jalen Hurts and Chiefs counterpart Patrick Mahomes.

"They have a good mesh there, and a good relationship," Reid said. "I think Travis has grown up a lot. Jason probably came in a bit more mature—Travis was a little immature. But he's really grown into a good person.

"I have invested time in both of those two," Reid added, "so I feel like a part of the family."

Source: Broncos get Payton as coach in deal with Saints

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. (AP)—The Denver Broncos have agreed to a deal with the New Orleans Saints that will make Sean Payton their head coach, a person with knowledge of the accord said Tuesday.

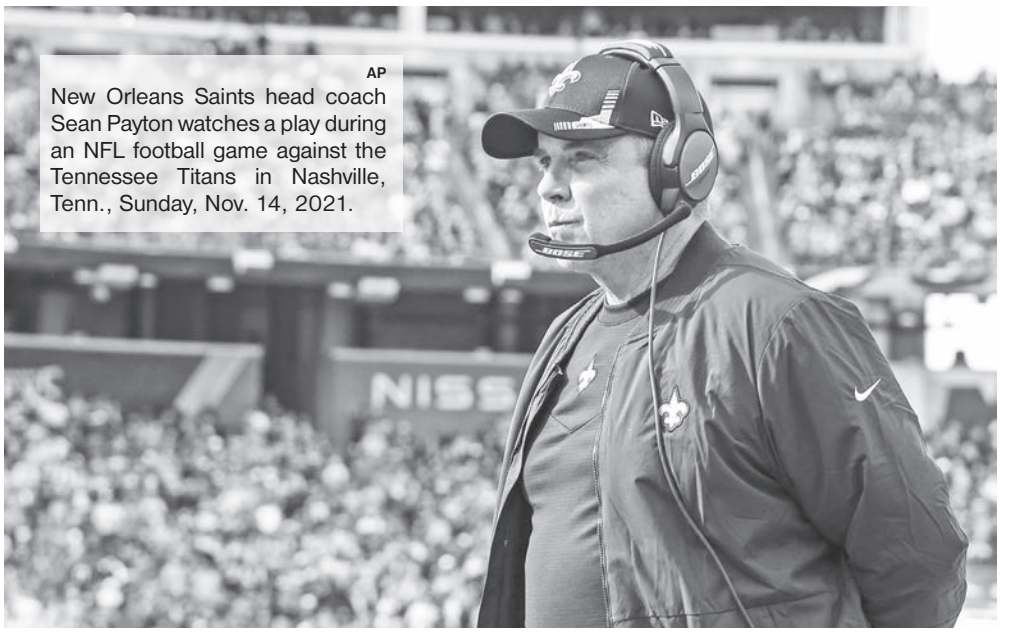
The person, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the teams hadn't announced the agreement, said the Broncos would send their first-round pick, No. 29 overall, in this year's draft to the Saints along with a future second-rounder. Denver also will receive a third-round pick in the trade.

Payton remained under contract with New Orleans after stepping down from the Saints last year and working in broadcasting this season.

Payton, 59, went 152-89 in 15 seasons with the Saints and 9-8 in the playoffs. He led New Orleans to a 31-17 win over the Indianapolis Colts in the Super Bowl following the 2009 season. He stepped away last year when quarterback Drew Brees retired.

The Broncos, who went 5-12 in 2022 and extended their playoff drought to seven years, fired rookie coach Nathaniel Hackett on Dec. 26 after he went 4-11. Interim coach Jerry Rosburg went 1-1.

Payton's top task will be to get quarterback Russell Wilson back to his winning ways after the 11-year pro had his worst statistical season following his blockbuster trade from Seattle for four premium draft picks and three players.



AP

New Orleans Saints head coach Sean Payton watches a play during an NFL football game against the Tennessee Titans in Nashville, Tenn., Sunday, Nov. 14, 2021.

The Seahawks reached the playoffs under QB Geno Smith in their first year without Wilson, and now they own the Broncos' No. 5 overall selection in the draft in April.

The Broncos got back into the first round by trading pass rusher Bradley Chubb at midseason to the Miami Dolphins, who sent the Broncos a first-rounder originally owned by the San Francisco 49ers.

That selection, the 29th overall pick, now belongs to the Saints.

Payton was the headliner during this year's cycle of head coach openings. Just five teams were searching for coaches: the Broncos, Texans, Panthers, Colts and Cardinals.

The Broncos conducted an extensive search, beginning with a virtual visit with Jim Harbaugh, who decided to stay at the University of Michigan. Also considered were Dan Quinn, DeMeco Ryans, Raheem Morris, Ejiro Evero, Jim Caldwell and David Shaw. The Texans hired Ryans on Tuesday.

NFL rules didn't allow the Broncos to speak with Payton until Jan. 17, more than three weeks after they'd fired Hackett.

Team owner and CEO Greg Penner led the search with assistance from limited partner Condoleezza Rice and general manager George Paton.

Paton led last year's search and landed on Hackett, one of several decisions that backfired on him in 2022 as Hackett became just the fifth head coach in NFL history not to survive his first season.

Others were the $70 million contract he gave to free agent Randy Gregory, who played in six games and recorded a pair of sacks, and the $245 million contract extension he gave to Wilson before the opener.

Wilson threw a career-low 16 touchdown passes and was sacked a league-leading and career-high 55 times in 15 games for Denver. He has vowed to do everything he can to bounce back in 2023.

Wilson played well for two weeks under Rosburg, giving the team hope that his poor performances last season were an aberration and that maybe his skill set was just a bad fit in Hackett's offense.

Penner, his wife, Carrie Walton-Penner, and her father, Rob Walton, purchased the Broncos last summer for $4.65 billion, a global record for a professional sports franchise. But the team turned out to be more of a fixer-upper than they expected.

"When we purchased this great franchise in August, this is not the season we were expecting," Penner said after firing Hackett. "I want to personally apologize to our fans and all of Broncos country. We know that we need to be better and we will."

DMS teams shine in boys MS v-ball

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

It was a full house during the Dandan Middle School junior varsity and varsity games, which they both won in the return of the NMIVA-PSS Interscholastic Middle School Volleyball League 2022-2023 last Tuesday at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

The DMS Tottots' JV team fought hard against Saipan Community School JV in the first set after a nail-biting 25-23 game.

Well placed serves and calculated returns by the rotation consisting of Kyle Ayeras, Jeremiah Blas, Daniel Buekis, Austin, Kianu, and Peter Camacho, Hunter and Jay Dela Cruz, Colton Guinto, Dusting and Kamron Pangelinan, Jayshaun and Lorenzo Reyes, and Keliv Lumbana upended the Guardians.

Then, the Tottos sealed the deal in the second set, 21-5, as back-to-back aces buckled the knees of the Guardians.

In the varsity game against the Mount Carmel School Knights, the Tottots came swooping down from the get-go, as the boys rotating lineup of Jordan Agulto, Rodel Apostol, Christopher and Tyler Cruz, Arvin Hornejas, Shayne Ngircheungel, Matthew Peters, Kallan Seidler, Dane Tibayan, Bernard Villagomez, Andrei Viola, Endree Yangilmau, and Joshua Yorormad, grabbed the first set, 21-16.

That was all they wrote, as in the second set, the Tottots gave almost no chances with their spikes and serves, and claimed it, 21-15.

In other results that night, Tanapag Middle School Tatagas and SCS varsity teams faced off, with the Tatagas winning in two sets, 21-11, 21-17.

Agape Christian School beat Francisco M. Sablan Middle School, 21-17, 21-5; and Cha Cha Ocean View Middle School fell to Saipan International School, 4-21, 1-21.

The league will last up to March 18 which is the scheduled date for the championship tournament.

LEIGH GASES
Dandan Middle School's boys junior varsity volleyball player Colton "Ten Ten" Guinto spikes during their game against Saipan Community School, which they won in the first game day of the NMIVA-PSS Interscholastic Middle School Volleyball League 2022-2023 last Tuesday at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

HAFA Miles 5K Run/Walk this Saturday

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
This Saturday, Feb. 4, Marianas Health is hosting a free HAFA Miles 5K Run/Walk from the Gov. Eloy S. Inos Peace Park to the Micro Beach Pavilion and back, in celebration of National Heart Health Month.

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

In celebration of February as National Heart Health Month, Marianas Health and its subsidiary agencies will once again be hosting a free HAFA Miles 5K Run/Walk this Saturday, Feb. 4, at 6am.

Registration starts at 5am and the route will run from the Gov. Eloy S. Inos Peace Park, through the Smiling Cove Marina, and to the turn around point at the Micro Beach Pavilion.

The first 100 finishers will receive a Marianas Health gift bag.

As an opportunity to bring awareness and lead people into healthier lifestyles, Marianas Health invites the public to join in this early morning run/walk event.

Marianas Health would like to raise awareness on the importance of a healthy heart and to encourage healthy habits that help reduce the risk of heart disease. Heart disease is the leading cause of death affecting the CNMI post-World War II due to significant lifestyle changes and dependence on imported processed foods.

For more information on this event, contact (670) 233-4646/47 or email info@marianashealth.com.

For more information on upcoming activities or information on services from Marianas Health, contact the Marianas Health office at (670) 233-4646, visit www.marianashealth.com, and follow social media platforms on Facebook or Instagram @ marianashealthpage.

Last Nov. 26 and Nov. 29, over 300 participants on Saipan and Rota joined Marianas Health's HAFA Miles 5K Run/Walk in celebration of National Homecare and Hospice Month, National Diabetes Prevention and Awareness Month, and National Caregivers Month.

The 2022 HAFA Miles 5K Run/Walk was an opportunity to bring awareness to those campaigns, and for schools to show their school spirit, as well as an opportunity for Marianas Health to raise funds for each school.

BILLIE

From Page 20

gelinan, who again rode her trusty Honda CRF150R in the twin heats.

On having no Power Puff Girls Class for the January race, she said it actually would've been nice to compete in two divisions at the start of the year.

"Having a Power Puff Girls Class was fun. The class is open to all girls which made it a nice class to watch. Because girls racing isn't something you'll always see. I just wish I was able to race both classes, to test my stamina and to have fun," said the Dandan Middle School student.

Pangelinan also thanked Marianas Pacific specifically Pokka, YCO True Value, Inas Kitchen, and Saltys for sponsoring her stint in the 2023 season Marianas Racing Association competition.

Pangelinan's rival in the Power Puff Girls Class, Nanako Celis, came in second in the Mini II with 44 points, while T.J. Ferrer was third with 40 points.

Igitol, for her part, dominated the debuting Mama's Class aboard her 2022 YZ125cc with 50 points and made history becoming the first monthly winner of the division. MRA introduced the Mama Class in last year's Turkey Cross.

"I feel very blessed and lucky to have won the Mama's Class competing with the other awesome mama riders. Getting some practice made me more comfortable with the track. When riding, I just focus on what's in front of me and try my best," said the 37-year-old kindergarten teacher at Gregorio T. Camacho Elementary School.

She dedicated her victory to her daughter, Anella, also a rider in the Mini ATV Class, son B.J., and her other half, Byron Castro, who rides in the Intermediate Class and coaches them under the Naughty Native Racing Team.

Igitol started her foray into motocross by trail riding first until the Kan Pacific track opened up. She was only a spectator watching her husband then was eventually encouraged to race with the Mini II Class. After her first race, Cowtown opened up and she just kept racing from there on.

"Never in my life have I ever thought I'd be racing dirt bikes. But after the first race, I just got hooked. It also became a family sport."

Mari Alvarez came second in the Mama's Class with 44 points, followed by Merissa Rasa's 40 points.

The results of the rest of the classes in the January edition of the 2023 Monster Energy Point Series Race will be published in the next issues of *Saipan Tribune*.

NICKOLE

From Page 20

provide a place for athletes to build their wrestling skills in a unique and fun environment. Her main coach is Jason Gates, along with coaches Peter Plott and Patrick Campbell.

"My wife and I would like to thank everyone from home and around the world for always supporting Nickole. The support keeps us connected as if we never left home. Nickole really appreciates you all," said Nicko.

Nicko is a U.S. Marine and a 2012 graduate of Saipan Southern High School, while his wife and Nickole's mother, Maria Victoria, is an alumnae of Marianas High School.

They now reside in Charleston, South Carolina.

TRAC

From Page 20

dridge," he said.

It was also a bonus that the CNMI National Triathlon Team also medaled in the Mini Games when Isaiah Aleksenko Leo Wania, Kathy Ruszala, and Heather Brook took the bronze medal in the run-swim-run event.

That gave the CNMI a perfect 9-for-9 in events offered in the Mini Games as it eventually medaled in all sports offered in the quadrennial event.

As for 2023, Sitchon said they will again have a full slate of activities for the islands' triathlon enthusiasts.

"To start the year 2023, we will have a duathlon, aquathlons, and sprint triathlon events in preparation for our athletes' participation in the upcoming events, particularly the Pacific Games in the Solomon Islands this coming November and December 2023."

To kick off the year, TRAC will hold the 7th Duathlon on Feb. 19 from Banzai Cliff in Marpi. The event will involve a 5-kilometer run, a 20-km bike, and 2.5-km run.

As for challenges in 2023, the TRAC head said some of the CNMI's top triathletes being ineligible to take part in regional events like the Pacific Games is a major stumbling block.

He said in the Pacific Games only U.S. citizens with five-year residency in the CNMI can represent the CNMI and that drastically limits TRAC's pool of available triathletes to send to such competitions.

James has triple-double, leads Lakers past Knicks in OT

PAGE 17

Saipan Tribune
Sports

DMS teams shine in boys MS v-ball

PAGE 19

Nickole wins gold in state championship

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Nickole Salem gets ready during her wrestling match in the South Carolina Youth Wrestling Association Rookie/Novice State Championship last Sunday at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Nickole Salem has already collected a dozen gold medals in her young wrestling career after she recently won gold in the South Carolina Youth Wrestling Association Rookie/Novice State Championship for the girls division and silver in the mixed division last Sunday, Jan. 29, in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

Six-year-old Salem joined the 6U 53-lb weight class in both divisions and also, a day before on Saturday, Jan. 28, won gold in the 6U 53-lbs rookie/novice division and gold in the 6U 53-lbs girls division.

In the girls division of Sunday's matches, Nickole beat Giavanna Hall and Kayden Fraser, while in the mixed division, she took down Nolan Range in the quarterfinals, won against Liam Smith, then lost to Seller Sisk, and finally, won against Darryl Jones in the silver match.

Since she started competing in wrestling last December, she's already won 12 medals.

Her father, Nicko Salem, said about her performance on both days, "According to her coaches she performed extremely well. Many parents came up to her and congratulated her personally."

Prior to the state championships, Nickole struck gold in South Carolina's Northern Regional Wrestling Tournament last Jan. 21 and also claimed gold in South Carolina's Southern Regional Wrestling Tournament last Jan. 24.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

From left, Nickole Salem's coaches Peter Plott, Patrick Campbell, and Jason Gates pose with Nickole after her matches in the South Carolina Youth Wrestling Association Rookie/Novice.

For the sport of jiu-jitsu, Nickole won two gold medals in the Jiu Jitsu World League Competition held last Nov. 19 at Osceola Heritage Park Event Center in Florida.

She currently trains with Legacy Elite Wrestling Club in Charleston County, South Carolina, which is a youth wrestling program created to

See NICKOLE on Page 19

Billie tops Mini II, Maribel wins first-ever Mama's Class

Pangelinan

Igitol

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Billie Inabo Pangelinan had to content herself winning another division, while Maribel Igitol was a pioneer by topping a new class in last Sunday's 2023 Monster Energy Point Series Race at the Cowtown Race Track.

A last-minute scrap of her favorite Power Puff Girls Class forced the 13-year-old Pangelinan to shift her focus in the Mini II Class.

Good thing she approached the division as she would the all-girls category and came away the winner with a perfect 50 points.

"It feels great to have a good start to the season. I would like to dedicate the win to my family and my team. What I think was working for me was the comfort and support I got from my family and friends which gave me so much adrenaline. It's also been awhile since the season ended and I missed the feeling of having races," said Pan-

See BILLIE on Page 19

TRAC proud of 'near perfect execution' of Mini Games

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The Triathlon Association of the CNMI is mighty proud of helping organize the triathlon competition of the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022 last June.

"Like other CNMI sports federations, TRAC's highlight for last year is our near perfect execution of the Pacific Mini Games 2022 that was held on Rota," said TRAC president Manny Sitchon.

He emphasized the competition set on Rota made the task even more herculean in an effort to make the Mini Games truly CNMI-wide. It can be recalled that the final classification matches of beach volleyball were held in neighboring Tinian.

"The would-be deal-breaker was the triathlon event was held off-island which made the task more difficult. Considering the logistics and everything, we were able to push through without any glitch. That was because of TRAC members' teamwork and the help of the Oceania Triathlon representatives Stephen Damien and Peter Al-

See TRAC on Page 19

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Triathlon Association of the CNMI president Manny Sitchon, third from left standing, joins other technical officials of the triathlon competition of the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022 last June on Rota.